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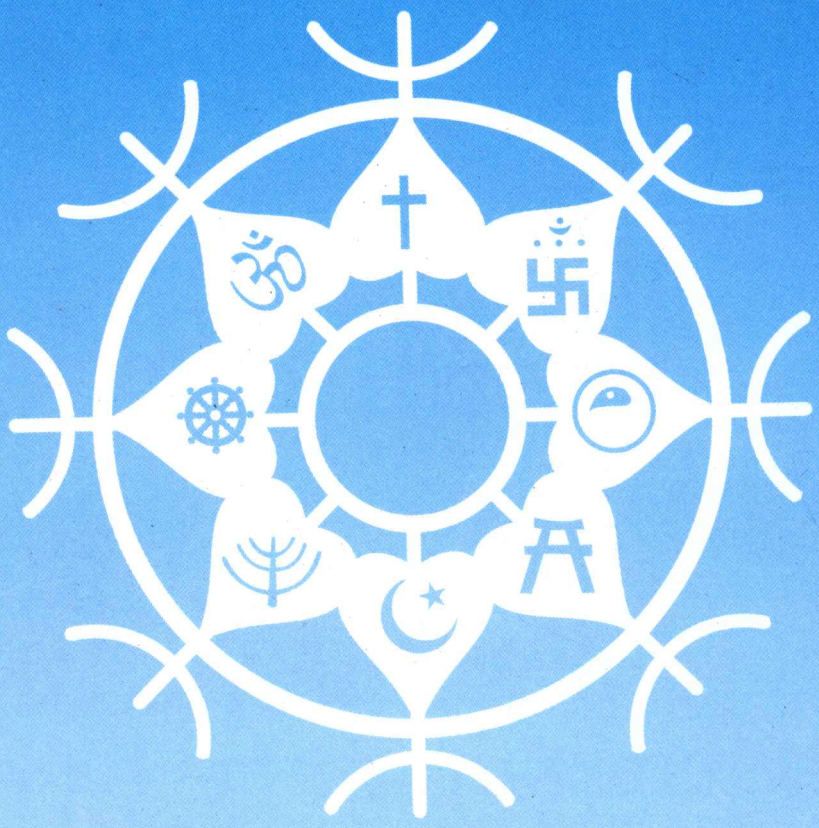

LIFE AFTER DEATH: OUTLOOKS

October-December 2012 Vol. 37, No. 4

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Editorial

LIFE AFTER DEATH
Quest for Meaning of Life before Death

Life after death is the concern of all reflective human beings, even though the contemporary culture dominated by science and technology seems to deny or avoid the topic. As we raise the question regarding the meaning of life, we also ask the question on what follows death. The various answers to the question given by philosophy, religion, mythology, and fiction maintain that an essential element of human beings survives death and the kind of existence depends on the life before death. From this perspective, death is not the end of life; rather a birth into a new form of life. There is a break as well as continuity of life; the continuity is in the moral and spiritual realm rather than at the physical level. Immortality of the soul, rebirth and resurrection are different answers provided by various cultures and belief systems. The Semitic traditions speak of continued existence in a spiritual realm; the Indian traditions in general speak of cycles of birth and death until final liberation. Christianity seems to present a unique view with the doctrine on the resurrection of the body. The Semitic views include a judgement by God whereas the result is entirely the fruit of one's actions in the Indian traditions.

Human soul, the root principle of life, is believed to be immortal, meaning that the soul not only survives the bodily death but also is indestructible by nature. A number of popular arguments are often given based on common consent, human desire for happiness and ethical life; they seem to offer a cumulative force in establishing the immortality of soul.

Argument from the common consent of humankind is a popular argument. People of all times and places, by and large, believed in the survival of human person after death. This is evident from the burial rites. Only human beings bury the dead and many primitive tribes provide them with food and tools for use in the afterlife. When palaeontologists wonder whether some fossil remnants belong to animals or humans, the discovery of burial rites settles the question. It is argued that if there is order in the universe, and if life is meaningful, human beings should not be holding on to a universal false belief. The argument is further strengthened by the belief in a good God, as God will not leave us to live with a false belief. It is objected, however, that human beings in the past held on to many false beliefs like geocentric vision. The proponents of the argument would point to the difference in the nature of the beliefs. The belief regarding the

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afterlife is not based on the interpretation of sense data, as was the erroneous common belief in the movement of the sun around the earth. Unlike the difference between geocentric and heliocentric vision, belief in the immortality affects human life most profoundly, since it is associated with the moral life of humankind. If life makes sense, it is difficult to suppose that the immense majority of humankind should be wrong in their fundamental belief in afterlife.

Human beings are moral beings as they make a difference between what is the case and what ought to be the case. Life is lead by not only facts but also values. The first principle of ethics states that good is to be done and evil is to be avoided. If human life has meaning, it follows that the good is to be rewarded and the evil is to be punished. Often it is our experience that good people suffer and the evil people prosper; that is, good is not sufficiently rewarded and evil is not appropriately punished. Justice seems to be not done. Human consciousness demands that this bad state of affairs should be rectified. This is possible only if the person or the essence of person survives physical death. Again, it is argued, if there is order in the universe, if life is meaningful and if there is a good God guiding human life, justice should prevail and afterlife provides a possibility to maintain justice.

A third similar popular argument is given by the universal human desire for happiness. Human beings have a natural craving for happiness which is not fulfilled often. If human beings believe that death is the end of their quest for happiness, most lives will end up in unhappiness rather than in happiness. Since such a craving for happiness is deep rooted in human nature, it is argued that its realization should be possible, if there is order in the universe, meaning for life and a good God. It would be contrary to God's wisdom and goodness to put into human beings a craving whose realization would be impossible. Therefore, human soul, the seat of perfect happiness, must survive death.

Besides the popular arguments, there are many other arguments for the belief in afterlife. Different religious traditions and belief systems provide their own unique views on afterlife. The present issue of the *Journal of Dharma* on "Life after Death: Outlooks" is an album of such views, collected from different peoples and cultures and presented systematically and critically by eminent scholars. In spite of the differences of their views, there is enough family resemblance to show that belief in the afterlife is a universal belief, held dear by most people most of the time in most places.

"Now and Hereafter: The Psychology of Hope from the Perspective of Religion" by Sahaya G. Selvam and Martin Poulsom explores the different dimensions of hope as it is conceptualised and empirically researched within positive psychology, a branch of psychology that focuses on wellbeing than on pathology, with three objectives: expound the dimensions of hope as it is explored within the domain of psychology by working within the theoretical framework of positive psychology, consider how hope, as measured by psychology, is seen to contribute to wellbeing and evaluate the psychology of hope from the perspective of religion, particularly Christianity. Hope is a permanent force in every human being, a driving power as long as we are alive and it is argued that faced with the reality of death, human beings have often drawn a sense of hope from a belief in life after death. Though the hope of the individual for participation in eternal life was more and more undercut by the present understanding of our world through science and philosophy, it is observed that optimistic people are so highly goal-oriented that they are able to distance themselves from negative outcomes and to lead a meaningful life. The authors also observe that while the words used may be the same, the meanings they carry for scientists interested in Positive Psychology and for those pursuing spirituality may diverge considerably, essentially because psychology is rooted in an appeal to reason, whereas authentic Christian spirituality is grounded in a recognition that all depends on God.

Maheshvari Naidu, in her well-researched paper, "'Transcendent' Genealogical and Kinship Relations: Afterlife in African Traditional Religions," presents an African worldview where there are levels of involvement and genealogical linkage between the living and the dead, as well as the world of the living and the world of the dead. In this perception, the dead do not go to another world but change their physical mode of existence to that of a spiritual one. There is no polarising dichotomy between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In the network of relationships, God, the deities, ancestors, the lineage, the clan, the ethnic group, etc., are interconnected to each other. It affirms the inner coherence of African religious worldview where the person is central and remains also a prominent figure after death, as an ancestor. Such a notion stresses also the role of the community, and one's life on earth as being defined through belonging to a community. As an ancestor, one continues to be useful to the community, because he/she remains a part of that community, even as a dead person and is able to be called upon to mediate between the descendent and God.

Vivian Besem Ojong explores a contemporary belief and practice in "The 'Working-Dead' in Nyongo Occult Economy in Cameroonian Society." Nyongo refers to a kind of witchcraft where occult powers are used to enslave others to amass wealth, power and social status. It would appear that those sold to slave labour are not dead but are 'living people' waiting for death. The author places nyongo discourse in its contemporary context in which the ethnography collected and the stories told are embedded. The ethnography consisted of interviews conducted among twenty Cameroonians. The article is based on fieldwork conducted in South Africa among Cameroonian migrants. It probes through the use of the perception-based method to capture their perceptions and experiences of nyongo. Interesting questions on life, identity and death are raised and explored in this article based on the beliefs and perceptions held by the people who are interviewed. Through the claims and accusations of nyongo, the boundary of life and death is stretched, creating possibilities for new forms of identity.

Maja Milčinski discusses the notions of impermanence and death as treated in the Chinese and Japanese philosophical traditions, particularly in connection with the Buddhist concept of emptiness and void and the Daoist answers to the problem, in her paper, "Impermanence and Soteriology." When approaching the question of human impermanence, the Sino-Japanese models begin with the mystical experience of the cosmic void. The second phase is the endeavour to formulate the experience into words and concepts which are used to describe this state to people who have not had the chance to experience it directly. Such experiments, however, remain at the margin of its essence, on the level of metaphor. She concludes with an interesting discussion on "Ego Emptiness versus the Void in Sino-Japanese Buddhism." The ego is afraid of being swallowed by the void, but at the same time it wants to master it; therefore, it builds around its axis a structure made up of scientific proofs and experiments with which it attempts to master the reality of life and, thus, to penetrate the void. In the Sino-Japanese tradition of void and silence, the search for and the finding of ways to come closer to the ineffable, through words and images, is the essence of its meditative-mystical search. The switch of consciousness is suggested as an essential condition for liberation of the Ego and its illusions. Impermanence is a didactic tool for spiritual evolvement and Asian cultures have traditionally been more accepting of the void and have encouraged self-cultivation techniques that open the doors to the void without the fear of it.

The intertestamental experience of the people of Israel, from about 200 BCE to about 100 CE, resulted in a new understanding of life and death. While looking for a survival in terms of nation as a whole, they tried also to see a survival beyond death in the form of resurrection. This is the claim of Xavier Terrence, well argued in his article, "Life after Death: In the Intertestamental Palestine Context." The Book of Jubilees, Ethiopic Enoch or 1Enoch, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Psalms of Solomon, Qumran Writings, Life of Adam and Eve, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 4Ezra and 2Baruch are examined to show the development of a belief in the resurrection of the dead. In these works, resurrection could be seen as a precondition of the judgment of humankind. The unjust suffering and the untimely cruel death of the righteous amidst the silence of God inspired the people of God to look for answers beyond the silence of graveyard, argues Xavier Terrence.

"Death and Afterlife" by V. F. Vineeth shares the fruits of his deep meditations on death and immortality, based on Hindu, Buddhist and Christian beliefs and practices. Human life transcends the temporal layers of existence as well as rational level of understanding. In faith level, we understand many things which our mind may initially object. Different forms of life after death appeared in human thinking and writing, especially in religious literature, and Professor Vineeth examines four such perspectives: Rebirth of Hindu Tradition, Sunya and Nirvana of Buddhist Path, Death as a Preamble of Resurrection and as a Call to the Graceful Offering of Life to God, as per the Christian faith. An earth-bound, ego-centred consciousness looks at death as a threat while the doctrine of resurrection presents death as a door to life with God and the people of God. Instead of fear and trembling, the believer longs for the coming of the Lord, as a bride longs for the arrival of the Bridegroom.

This fundamental faith of Christians is further explored by Geo Pallikunnel in "Eschatological Vision of Syro Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy." Liturgy as one of the main *locus theologicus* of the Christian tradition, the author reflects on the end times and the heavenly realities, based on the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Syro Malabar Church of the East Syriac tradition. After a preliminary examination of Time and End-time in the Jewish Tradition, he affirms that by the incarnation–resurrection Christ becomes the Lord and mediator of time and eternity. The Church as the continuation of Christ, who unites time and eternity, here and now, unites time and eternity in its principal action, the liturgy. The Syro Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy is a liturgy developed outside the Roman Empire in the

East Syriac genre. Since it developed outside the Hellenistic culture it has less influence of Greek thinking and more on the line of Semitic and Asian vision, where Christianity and Bible had their origin. In this tradition, the earthly liturgy is the memorial and celebration of the economy of salvation (*mdabbrānutā*) of God completed in Christ, and the anticipation of the heavenly liturgy. The whole liturgy is considered as an image of what is happening in heaven and its revelation. The whole Eucharistic Liturgy of this tradition reveals an eschatological vision and it culminates in the Communion rite. It is a foretaste of the eschatological life and also a movement towards the final fulfilment. By examining the characteristics of Liturgical Time and Spatial Orientation of the Church building, Pallikunnel brings out worshipping community's movement toward the *eschaton*. He examines also the Eschatological Vision of the Eucharistic Liturgy Proper in the Syro Malabar tradition. It is argued that the Syro Malabar liturgy of the East Syriac tradition has a unique way of expression and celebration of its eschatological vision.

The different outlooks on life after death show that the belief in afterlife is widespread spatially and temporally. Life before death seems to need a life after death for meaning and significance. This belief, however, shall not in any way belittle the life before death; life before death is significant and every effort must be taken for the wellbeing of each individual and community. Human beings, as they are fundamentally believers and truth seekers, cannot deny their beliefs nor stop searching for truth regarding their beliefs. "Life after Death: Outlooks" is a sample of human quests in making sense of life and death, inviting and challenging the readers to thoughts of their own and to make sense of their beliefs rather than denying or avoiding their fundamental beliefs.

Jose Nandhikkara, *Chief Editor*

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NOW AND HEREAFTER
The Psychology of Hope from the Perspective of Religion

Sahaya G. Selvam and Martin Poulsom♦

"Why do you think we have a winner [in the Hunger Games?] ...
Hope. It is the only thing stronger than fear."
Hunger Games Movie

1. Introduction

Faced with the harsh reality of death, human beings have often drawn a sense of hope from a belief in life after death. Religions have earnestly supported this faith and hope. As Paul Tillich put it, "Without hope, the tension of our life toward the future would vanish, and with it, life itself."[1] In recent times, hope has also become a subject matter for psychology. Does psychology risk separating hope from religion, focussing too narrowly on the immediate future? Or could the treatment of hope offered by psychology give a sense of meaning to life similar to that provided by religion? This article examines recent developments in the psychology of hope from the perspective of religion.

The objectives of this paper are threefold. First, to expound the dimensions of hope as it is explored within the domain of psychology. This is achieved by working within the theoretical framework of positive psychology, which considers hope as a character strength that contributes to human wellbeing and happiness. As psychology relies heavily on measurements it is also necessary to consider how the construct is operationalized in instruments of measure. The second objective is to consider how hope, as measured by psychology, is seen to contribute to wellbeing. Finally, a brief evaluative reflection is offered on the psychology of hope from the perspective of religion, particularly Christianity.

♦**Dr Sahaya G. Selvam** is the Coordinator of the Master's Programmes at the Institute of Youth Ministry, Tangaza College, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya. He holds MPh from Satya Nilayam, Chennai, and MA and PhD in Psychology of Religion, both from Heythrop College, University of London. Email: selvam@donbosco.or.tz.

Dr Martin Poulsom is a Lecturer in Theology at the Department of Theology, Heythrop College, London. He holds MTh in Pastoral Theology, from Heythrop College, MPhil in Philosophy of Religion from Cambridge University and DPhil in Philosophical Theology from Oxford University. Email: m.poulsom@heythrop.ac.uk

[1]Paul Tillich, "Right to Hope" – a sermon at Harvard's Memorial Church in March 1965. http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=62. (05/06/12).

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2. Virtues and Character Strengths in Positive Psychology

In 1998, when Martin Seligman was elected as the president of the American Psychology Association (APA) he sounded a clarion call, appealing for psychology to focus on wellbeing and happiness as it does on pathology and psychological disorder.[2] He pointed out that since the time of the two World Wars psychology has, perhaps necessitated by the social context, focussed on curing psychological disorder. It has achieved this to an appreciable extent: fourteen mental disorders are now curable or can be considerably relieved. According to Seligman, it is now time to ask what makes people flourish.[3] The stream of psychology that took to this focus is referred to as 'positive psychology'.

Positive psychology draws insights from religious traditions and philosophy. Its interests are similar to those of humanistic psychology, but it differs sharply from it in that positive psychology embraces an empirical approach. It is the focus on existential questions with an empirical grounding that makes positive psychology unique. It sees happiness and wellbeing as the outcome of three dimensions: a pleasant life – the "pursuit of positive emotions about the present, past and future;" an engaged life – consisting in "using your strengths and virtues to obtain abundant gratification in the main realms of life;" and a meaningful life – that presupposes the "use of your strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are."[4] More precisely, authentic happiness is measured in terms of life satisfaction; and wellbeing is delineated in terms of three categories: subjective,[5] psychological[6] and social.[7]

Research – and even intervention based therapy[8] – within positive psychology is guided by a catalogue of core virtues and character

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[2]Raymond D. Fowler, Martin E. P. Seligman, and Gerald P. Koocher, "The APA 1998 Annual Report," *American Psychologist* 54, 8 (1999), 537-568.

[3]Martin E. P., Seligman, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology," *American Psychologist* 55, 1 (2000), 5-14.

[4]Martin E. P. Seligman, "Positive Psychology: Fundamental Assumptions," *The Psychologist* 16, 3 (2003),127.

[5]Ed Diener, "Subjective Well-being," *Psychological Bulletin* 95, 3 (1984), 542-575.

[6]Carol Ryff, "Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Wellbeing," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, 6 (1989), 1069-1081.

[7]James S. Larson, "The Measurement of Social Well-being," *Social Indicators Research* 28, 3 (1993), 285-296.

[8]Martin E. P. Seligman, Tayyab Rashid and Acacia C. Parks, "Positive Psychotherapy," *American Psychologist* 61, 8 (2006), 774-788.

strengths,[9] which are also referred to as the 'Values in Action.'[10] This 'Manual of the Sanities' lists six core virtues and 24 character strengths that are said to contribute to human flourishing (Table 1).

Table 1

Core Virtues	Character Strengths
Wisdom and Knowledge	Creativity (originality, ingenuity), Curiosity (interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience), Open-mindedness (judgement, critical thinking), Love of Learning, Perspective (wisdom)
Courage	Bravery (valour), Persistence (perseverance, industriousness), Integrity (authenticity, honesty), Vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigour, energy)
Humanity	Love, Kindness (generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"), Social Intelligence (emotional intelligence, personal intelligence)
Justice	Citizenship (social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork), Fairness, Leadership
Temperance	Forgiveness and Mercy, Humility (modesty), Prudence, Self-regulation (self-control)
Transcendence	Appreciation of beauty and excellence (awe, wonder, elevation), Gratitude, Hope (optimism, future-mindedness, future-orientation), Humour (playfulness), Spirituality (religiousness, faith, purpose)

Virtue is defined here as "any psychological process that enables a person to think and act so as to benefit him – or herself and society."[11] Although one of the criteria used to generate the list of virtues is that "each

[9]Christopher Peterson and Martin E.P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, Washington: American Psychological Association, 2004.

[10]Christopher Peterson, "The Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths" in Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi (eds.), *A Life Worth Living: Contributions to Positive Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 29-48.

[11]Michael McCullough and C.R. Snyder, "Classical Source of Human Strength: Revisiting an Old Home and Building a New One," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 19, 1 (2000), 1.

strength is morally valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial outcomes,"[12] in positive psychology 'virtue' is not to be understood as carrying a prescriptive moral implication. Rather, virtues are generic categories that are expressed in character strengths. "Character strengths are the psychological ingredients – processes or mechanisms – that define the virtues. Said another way, they are distinguishable routes to displaying one or another of the virtues."[13] Beyond this circular definition, character strengths are described as trait-like and are measurable in terms of an individual's behaviour, including thoughts, feelings and actions. The universal occurrence of these virtues and character strengths, in a variety of cultural and religious traditions, has been adequately acknowledged.[14]

3. Hope as Character Strength

One of the character strengths listed under the virtue of transcendence is hope (see Table 1). "Hope, optimism, future-mindedness, and future-orientation represent a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance towards the future."[15] In more precise terms, this stance consists in "expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about."[16] Hope is also expressed in optimism and a positive outlook about life and people. According to some psychologists hope could also be rendered in terms of 'agency thinking:' "I am not going to be stopped."[17] Hope flows from the human ability to imagine, that is, to see what is not present in the here and now. From this ability emerges an outlook that all is going to be well, even when an individual is in the midst of the harsh realities of life at the

[12]Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 19.

[13]Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 14.

[14]Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 40-50; Katherine Dahlsgaard, Christopher Peterson, and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths across Culture and History," *Review of General Psychology* 9, 3 (2005), 203-213; C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, *Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strength*, California: Sage Publications, 2007, 23-50. Sahaya G. Selvam and Joanna Collicutt, "The Ubiquity of the Character Strengths in African Traditional Religion: A Thematic Analysis," in Hans H. Knoop and Antonella H. Delle Fave, eds., *Wellbeing and Cultures: Perspectives from Positive* Psychology, Heidelberg: Springer, 2013, 83-102.

[15]Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 570.

[16]Peterson, "The Values in Action," 33.

[17]C. R. Snyder, Anne B. LaPointe, J. Jeffrey Crowson and Shannon Early, "Preferences of High-and Low-Hope People for Self Referential Feedback," *Cognition and Emotion* 12 (1998), 807-823.

present. This sense of hope often emanates from one's belief in the existence of a greater power, or God. Having presented a broad-brush understanding of hope, we will now explore various conceptual dimensions of hope focussing on the contributions of four psychologists who work within the framework of positive psychology.

3.1. Seligman: Hope as Optimism

A simple way of understanding hope is in terms of optimism. Positive psychology has made a significant contribution to the understanding of optimism, which is also referred to as "positivity."[18] Within psychological research, optimism has been understood in two ways: as specific optimism, perceivable in hopeful expectations in given situations, and as "dispositional optimism," a relatively enduring characteristic that changes little across time and context, whereby an individual generally expects positive outcomes to emerge most of the time.[19]

Seligman studied dispositional optimism in order to elucidate how people routinely account for events in their lives, in terms of what he called their "explanatory style." People who exhibit an optimistic explanatory style "attribute problems in their lives to temporary, specific, and external (as opposed to permanent, pervasive, and internal) causes."[20] According to Seligman, optimistic people are so highly goal-oriented that they are able to distance themselves from negative outcomes. Being goal-oriented is also often related to the grasp of the meaning of life.

Surprisingly, optimism is not a state that is very natural to human beings. Evidence from neuroscience suggests that human memory is better facilitated, marked by increased sensory processing, when encountering inputs that are perceived to be negative.[21] From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, this hardwired condition of preferential memory

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[18]Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive*, New York: Crown Publishers/Random House, 2009.

[19]Michael F. Scheier and Charles S. Carver, "On the Power of Positive Thinking: The Benefits of Being Optimistic," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 2, 1 (1993), 26-30.

[20]Martin E. P. Seligman, et al., "Optimism, Pessimism, and Explanatory Style," *Optimism and Pessimism: Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice*, Washington: American Psychological Association, 2001, 54.

[21]Katherine R. Mickley and Elizabeth A. Kensinger, "Emotional Valence Influences the Neural Correlates Associated with Remembering and Knowing," *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Neuroscience* 8, 2 (2008), 143-152.

for negative events in humans may be attributed to the state that, for survival, it is more important to avoid negative situations or dangers as a priority than to be attracted toward positive situations or pleasures.[22] However, this negativity forces us to focus on survival, and prolonged negativity contributes to pathological conditions such as depression and anxiety. On the other hand, positivity makes us see possibilities, motivating us to be creative and to seek alternatives.

Hope may include, but it is more than, optimism and positivity. Optimism is the expectancy that all will be well, whereas hope includes also striving towards a goal. Of course, optimism as a positive emotion can provide the energy for this striving. The understanding of hope as striving towards a goal is brought out more lucidly by another founding contributor to positive psychology: Charles Snyder.[23]

3.2. Snyder: Hope as Pathways to Desired Goals

Snyder defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy) and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)."[24] From this definition, the goal can be identified as the element that links agency and pathways. Someone with high levels of hope possesses the capability to develop pathways to their desired goals, and to motivate themselves through agency-thinking to achieve those goals. Snyder's model of hope is basically cognitive in content, but also allows for the inclusion of emotions. Hope-induced motivation is a positive emotional state, as suggested by his use of the term "energy."

For Snyder, "Goals are objects, experiences, or outcomes that we imagine and desire in our minds."[25] However, if a goal is immediate and sure to be achieved then it will not involve much hope. Similarly, goals that

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[22]Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, New York: Knopf, 1991, 114.

[23]C. R. Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope: You can Get There from Here*, New York: Free Press, 1994; C. R. Snyder, Kevin L. Rand, and David R. Sigmon, "Hope Theory: A Member of the Positive Psychology Family," *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 257-276; C. R. Snyder, "Target Article: Hope Theory: Rainbows in the Mind," *Psychological Inquiry* 13, 4 (2002), 249-275.

[24]C. R. Snyder, Lori M. Irving, and John R. Anderson, "Hope and Health," *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology: The Health Perspective*, Elmsford: Pergamon Press, 1991, 287.

[25]Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope*, 6.

are impossible to achieve do not inspire hope either. Here, the epigraph to this article from the movie *The Hunger Games* seems relevant. Snow, the president of Panem, asks Seneca Crane, the co-ordinator of the Hunger Games, "Seneca, why do you think we have a winner?" "What do you mean?" Seneca replies, puzzled: "I mean, why do we have a winner?" Snow repeats, and answers his own question after a pause, "Hope." "Hope?" Seneca asks. "Hope," explains Snow. "It is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective; a lot of hope is dangerous."

In Snyder's words, "the goals involving hope fall somewhere between an impossibility and a sure thing."[26] Snyder goes on to suggest, rather humorously, that the sign at the entrance to Dante's hell, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here" is appropriate because hell offers no possibility for attaining any further goal. On the other hand, he says, even at the entrance to heaven a similar sign might be called for, because heaven is the fulfilment of all goals. His witty reference to heaven and hell notwithstanding, Snyder's theory of goal-oriented hope presupposes none of the hopes that religions envisage. Nevertheless, there are other psychologists, even within the positive psychology movement, who relate hope to these more profound aspirations.

3.3. Damon: Hope as a Sense of Purpose in Life

William Damon, in his landmark study,[27] suggests that one-fifth of young people between the age of 12 and 26 in the USA are thriving. They are highly engaged in activities that they love, experience a lot of energy, and enjoy general wellbeing. On the other hand, the other four-fifths of the young population are wasting their energy, and without effective mentoring they may not reach their full potential. The difference between these two groups of young people is their "sense of purpose." This sense of purpose is often directed outside oneself in altruistic ways: "Only a positive, pro-social purpose can provide the lasting inspiration, motivation, and resilience that is characteristic of a truly purposeful life. [...] We are programmed (hardwired) to experience a sense of 'moral elevation' when we behave benevolently and empathetically towards others."[28]

Damon himself does not freely use the word 'hope' in his book. However, in his personal blog he suggests that purpose provides hope:

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[26]Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope*, 6.

[27]William Damon, *The Path to Purpose: How Young People Find their Calling in Life*, New York: Free Press, 2008.

[28]Damon, *The Path to Purpose*, 40.

> The road to hope, for both the individual and the society, can only be approached by the path to purpose. Purpose is required to fill the spiritual vacuum that leads to drift, apathy, cynicism, and nihilism. Purpose is needed to sustain the will to strive, achieve, contribute, and continue learning. Purpose provides resilience in hard times, elevation in good times, and confident aspiration all throughout life. It is the key to psychological survival [...] and a state of thriving and wellbeing.[29]

Damon further acknowledges the role of religion in the path to purpose: "Every religious tradition advances the notion that the closer we come to God's purpose for us, the more satisfied we shall become in our daily lives."[30] A number of the happy young people that he and his colleagues interviewed were strongly committed to their faith. They told researchers that they felt gratitude, and a sense of resilience in their path towards the fulfilment of their purpose of life inspired by their faith in God. Damon concludes that the sense of purpose and meaning takes on a deeper significance when life is viewed as a 'calling.' When this sense of calling is supported by faith, it takes on a higher level of motivation. One central point that has emerged from the above discussion is that hope is oriented towards an end – a goal. Robert Emmons has taken the discussion a step even further, associating hope with "ultimate concerns."[31]

3.4. Emmons: Hope as an Ultimate Concern

For Emmons, an ultimate concern is something in which maximum value is invested, that directs one's whole life. Therefore, an ultimate concern is "that above which no other concerns exist. It is literally at the end of the striving line."[32] However, the ultimate concern is often not just a singular goal, it is a collection of strivings that provide the utmost meaning to life; hence Emmons uses the plural form, 'ultimate concerns.' Emmons points out that there has not been much effort in psychology to include spiritual or religious concerns in goal-oriented categories. Based on the observations of the Christian theologian Paul Tillich, Emmons goes on to investigate the role of religion and spirituality in determining ultimate concerns. He equates spiritual strivings to ultimate concerns, pointing out

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[29]William Damon, "Age of Purpose," http://www.williamdamon.com/2009/10/the-age-of-purpose> (21 June 2012).

[30]Damon, *The Path to Purpose*, 44-45.

[31]Robert A. Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns: Motivation and Spirituality in Personality*, New York: Guildford Press, 1999.

[32]Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns*, 95.

that "a religious perspective can illuminate the origins of some of the most profound human strivings. Religions, as authoritative faith traditions, are systems of information that provide individuals with knowledge and resources for living a life of purpose and direction."[33]

There is a reciprocal relationship between spirituality and ultimate concerns. On the one hand, religion and spirituality offer a meaning for human strivings. On the other hand, the goal-orientation that is directed by ultimate concerns "provides a general unifying framework to capture the dynamic aspect of religion in people's lives."[34] In the context of developing instruments of measure in psychology, the approach of ultimate concerns provides certain specificity to measures of spirituality. Interestingly, Emmons contends that "ideological beliefs regarding particular religious worldviews may or may not be revealed in personal strivings. Nor, necessarily would beliefs pertaining to life after death, salvation and redemption, or other ultimate concerns automatically appear on someone's list of strivings."[35] Often they are a mixture of ideological beliefs and existentially based goals.

Considered together, the four psychological approaches to hope that have been presented above show a progressive development when considered from the perspective of religion and spiritual traditions. While optimism might seem more existential in content, ultimate concerns might more easily include ideological beliefs that are inspired by religion. At another level of clarification, some psychologists have made a distinction between "trait-hope" and "state-hope."[36] While trait-hope describes the enduring general disposition that an individual possesses in goal-oriented pathways, state-hope refers to the specific way one might exercise that disposition in a given situation. We suggest that religious sense of hope might include the level of trait-hope. However, given the empirical discourse of psychology these constructs are operationalized in measurable dimensions, thus making them more concrete.

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[33]Robert A. Emmons and Raymond F. Paloutzian, "The Psychology of Religion," *Annual Review of Psychology* 54 (2003), 392.

[34]Robert A. Emmons, "Striving for the Sacred: Personal Goals, Life Meaning, and Religion," *Journal of Social Issues* 61, 4 (2005), 731.

[35]Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns*, 108-109.

[36]Pat Harney, et al., "The Will and the Ways: Development and Validation of an Individual-Differences Measure of Hope," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 4 (1991), 570-585; Raymond L. Higgins, et al., "Development and Validation of the State Hope Scale," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 2 (1996), 321-335.

4. Psychological Measures of Hope

A major concern in positive psychology is to operationalize constructs into measurable items which are eventually factorised into dimensions of the construct, based on the statistical correlation of the data collected from a particular population. Therefore, one effective way of understanding psychological concepts, such as hope, is to examine how they are operationalized in terms of items in a scale. The purpose of this review is not to examine the psychometric properties of the scales but only to focus on the various dimensions of hope as they are itemised in these instruments. We suppose this could further our understanding of the psychology of hope, enabling us to evaluate it in the light of religious traditions.

4.1. The Values in Action: Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)

Values in Action (VIA) refers to the list of virtues and character strengths developed by Peterson and Seligman (see Table 1). The 24 character strengths are measured by means of "The Values in Action – Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)" with 10 items for each character strength. It is a self-reported measure, normally administered online.[37] The online version generates the top five "signature strengths" for the participant. Reliability and validity values of the VIA-IS have been reported to be adequate.[38] The 10 items that measure hope and optimism in the VIA-IS are grouped as: optimism, future-orientation, and goal-orientation.

4.2. Adult Dispositional Hope Scale and Adult State Hope Scale

The Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS)[39] is based on Snyder's concept of hope, described above. The instrument measures the two main dimensions of hope, namely, pathways and agency dimensions. One drawback to the ADHS is that it only measures trait-hope or dispositional hope. Therefore, Snyder and colleagues went on to develop the Adult State Hope Scale (ASHS),[40] focussing on goal-orientation at any given time.

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[37]http://www.viacharacter.org/

[38]Alex Linley, et al., "Character Strengths in the United Kingdom: The VIA Inventory of Strengths," *Personality and Individual Differences* 43, 2 (2007), 341-351; Alison M. LaFollette, "The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths: A Test Summary and Critique," *Graduate Journal of Counseling Psychology* 2, 1 (2010), 7-14.

[39]Pat Harney, et al., "The Will and the Ways: Development and Validation of an Individual-Differences Measure of Hope," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60, 4 (1991), 570-585.

[40]Raymond L. Higgins, et al., "Development and Validation of the State Hope Scale," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, 2 (1996), 321-335.

4.3. Adult Domain Specific Hope Scale (DSHS)

The general weakness of the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) and Adult State Hope Scale (ASHS) is that they measure hope without paying attention to variation in degree. And the degree of hope could be very much conditioned by different life domains. For instance, a young person might exhibit a high level of hope in goals that are linked to academic development, but a low level in goals that are related to family life. To respond to this, Susie Sympson developed the Domain Specific Hope Scale (DSHS).[41] This instrument measures an individual's level of dispositional hope in six specific areas: social, academic, family, romance or relationships, work, and leisure activities.

4.4. Multidimensional Inventory for Religious/Spiritual Wellbeing

This relatively new scale measures six dimensions of religious wellbeing: general religiosity, forgiveness, hope-immanent, hope-transcendent, connectedness, and experience of sense and meaning.[42] The highlight of this measure is its distinction of two types of hope. Hope-Immanent consists in being optimistic that the future is going to be exciting. It includes a sense that life is moving in the right direction; or, if this is not the case, being certain that at least things will improve in the future. While Hope-Immanent is focused on this life, even if it is about the future, Hope-Transcendent is about the afterlife. It consists in the recognition of the transience of this life, together with the hopeful acceptance of life after death, and an experience of hope that emerges from the possibility of being remembered after death.

The above review of sampled measures of hope provides further insight into how hope is construed within psychology. Before evaluating this understanding from the point of view of religion and faith, we briefly point out the role of hope in human wellbeing as claimed by psychological studies.

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[41]Susie C. Sympson, *Validation of the Domain Specific Hope Scale: Exploring Hope in Life Domains*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1999; see also, C. R. Snyder, *Handbook of Hope: Theory, Measures, And Applications*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2000.

[42]Human Unterrainer, Oliver Nelson, Joanna Collicutt and Andreas Fink, "The English Version of the Multidimensional Inventory for Religious/Spiritual Well-Being (MI-RSWB-E): First Results from British College Students," *Religions*, 3.3 (2012): 588-599; A. Fink, et al., "Dimensions of Religious/Spiritual Well-Being and Their Relation to Personality and Psychological Wellbeing," *Personality and Individual Differences* 49, 3 (2010), 192-197.

5. The Role of Hope in Human Wellbeing

The core mission of positive psychology is to proactively promote research and come up with techniques that will contribute to health, wellbeing and happiness.[43] Health is considered in a comprehensive perspective, inclusive of physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. And health and wellbeing are perceived as correlates of happiness.[44] How does positive psychology understand wellbeing and happiness? It has begun to explore these concepts in the parlance of Greek philosophical terminology of *hedonia* and *eudaimonia*.[45] While *hedonia* refers to those aspects of wellbeing that arise from pleasure oriented activities, *eudaimonia* refers to fulfilment of our potential as human beings. Furthermore, positive psychology literature makes some distinctions among emotional or subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, and social wellbeing.[46]

Subjective wellbeing or emotional wellbeing[47] includes individual happiness, presence of positive affect, and absence of negative affect. It is an individual experience, which excludes objective conditions like health, comfort, virtue and wealth. Therefore, Ryff and colleagues have been critical of identifying psychological health with subjective wellbeing,[48] and have preferred to use the term 'human flourishing' or 'psychological wellbeing.' In this understanding, wellbeing is not synonymous with happiness, and their approach to defining wellbeing is clearly in terms of *eudaimonia*. Psychological wellbeing is measured in terms of six factors: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, feeling competent and being able to manage one's environment, autonomy, and positive relations with others. As mentioned above, there is a third account of wellbeing that

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[43]Seligman, Martin E. P., "Building Human Strength: Psychology's Forgotten Mission," *APA Monitor* 29, 1 (1998), 2.

[44]Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment*, New York: Free Press, 2002.

[45]Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, "Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-being: An Introduction," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9, 1 (2008), 1-11.

[46]Corey L.M. Keyes and Shane J. Lopez, S. J., "Toward a Science of Mental Health: Positive Directions in Diagnosis and Interventions," in C. R. Snyder, & Shane J. Lopez, eds., *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 45-62.

[47]Diener, "Subjective Well-Being," 542-575.

[48]Carol D. Ryff and Corey L.M. Keyes, "The Structure of Psychological Well-Being Revisited," *Journal of Personality and Social* Psychology 69, 4 (1995), 719-727; Carol D. Ryff, "Psychological Wellbeing in Adult Life," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 4, 4 (1995), 100.

challenges the individual emphasis implied in both the subjective and psychological approaches to wellbeing. Scholars have evolved constructs and measures to examine what they call social wellbeing.[49] Social wellbeing is considered in terms of the following dimensions: social acceptance, social actualization, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration.

Even if the distinction between these three types of wellbeing can be argued for conceptually, there is an underpinning overlap between the three, especially in the means of achieving states of happiness and wellbeing. Often these means are associated with goal, purpose and meaning-making. Studies that suggest a significant impact of hope, particularly goal-oriented types, on subjective wellbeing are abundant. This is true across populations drawn from different continents,[50] various age groups,[51] and among general as well as clinical populations.[52] Hope is also found to correlate positively with a number of beneficial constructs of ordinary life, including academic achievement.[53] While reporting Damon's study of the young people in the U.S. we have already suggested that a clear sense of purpose in life not only reduces the chances of young people engaging in deviant behaviour, but can also provide meaning in life, and contribute to wellbeing – better health of mind and body. On the other hand, depression and suicidal behaviour, and to a lesser degree, alcohol

[49]Larson, "The Measurement of Social Wellbeing," 1993.

[50]Tsukasa Kato and C. R. Snyder, "The Relationship between Hope and Subjective Wellbeing: Reliability and Validity of the Dispositional Hope Scale, Japanese Version," *Japanese Journal of Psychology* 76, 3 (2005), 227-234; Tharina Guse and Yvonne Vermaak, "Hope, Psychosocial Well-Being and Socioeconomic Status among a Group of South African Adolescents," *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 21, 4 (2011), 527-534.

[51]Bonnie Davis, "Mediators of the Relationship Between Hope and Wellbeing in Older Adults," *Clinical Nursing Research* 14, 3 (2005), 253-272; Anthony L. Burrow, Amanda C. O'Dell, and Patrick L. Hill, "Profiles of a Developmental Asset: Youth Purpose as a Context for Hope and Well-Being," *Journal of Youth & Adolescence* 39, 11 (2010), 1265-1273.

[52]Cheri Marmarosh, Ari Holtz, and Michele Schottenbauer, "Group Cohesiveness, Group-Derived Collective Self-Esteem, Group-Derived Hope, and the Well-Being of Group Therapy Members," *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 9, 1 (2005), 32-44.

[53]C. R. Snyder et al., "Hope and Academic Success in College," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 94, 4 (2002), 820-826.

abuse, are correlated to hopelessness.[54] Hopelessness is understood as the absence of purpose in life and, more precisely, the lack of self-efficacy and problem-solving abilities.[55]

What type of hope is relevant to wellbeing? Even hope understood as optimism, the first and most basic type analysed above, seems to spontaneously build a sense of connectedness with humankind, by facilitating "social interest." This in turn is said to have a positive impact on mental wellbeing.[56] Interestingly, sometimes it is goal-focused hope, rather than spiritually-based hope (having spiritual beliefs concerning the existence of some form of life after death or 'higher power'), that seems to have a greater impact on subjective wellbeing.[57]

These findings, and the conceptualising of hope within the domains of psychology, are very interesting for scholars of religion, given that hope is considered a virtue in many religious traditions. In Christianity, it is one of the three theological virtues, along with faith and charity.[58] How far does the understanding of the psychology of hope, which has emerged from our discussion above, contrast or complement the understanding of hope within religions and theologies? In the final section of this article we proceed to look at this issue.

6. Evaluating the Psychology of Hope from the Perspective of Religion

There have been several scholarly attempts to create a dialogue between positive psychology and religions: such as Buddhism,[59] African traditional

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[54]David E. Schotte and George A. Clum, "Suicide Ideation in a College Population: A Test of a Model," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 50, 5 (1982), 690-696; see also Diener, "Subjective Wellbeing," 1984.

[55]Puncky P. Heppner and Dong-gwi Lee, "Problem-solving Appraisal and Psychological Adjustment," C.R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, eds., *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 288-298.

[56]Patrick J. Barlow, David Tobin and Melissa Schmidt, "Social Interest and Positive Psychology: Positively Aligned," *Journal of Individual Psychology* 65, 3 (2009), 191-202.

[57]Jen Unwin and Joanne M. Dickson, "Goal Focused Hope, Spiritual Hope, and Well-Being," *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (2010), 161-174.

[58]See, Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, Paul Philibert, trans., Minnesota: Order of St. Benedict, 2002, 47-50.

[59]Maurits G.T. Kwee and Marja K. Kwee-Taams, "Buddhist Psychology and Positive Psychology," Antonella Delle Fave, ed., *Dimensions of Well-being: Research and Intervention,* Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006, 565-582.

religion,[60] and religion and spirituality in general.[61] Some scholars have also critiqued positive psychology, particularly its conceptual foundations, from the perspective of religion. Taking a Confucian perspective, Louise Soundarajan has called positive psychology a "happiness donut."[62] She points out that the empirically based version of the good life proposed by positive psychology lacks a moral core. What she calls "Seligman's model" of virtue is an inventory of "signature strengths" which do not have a moral connotation, in contrast to the vision of good life that emerges from the East, especially the Confucian tradition. Positive psychology, she argues, typifies a Western worldview that contrasts with a more Eastern worldview: individualism versus collectivism; mastery over the environment (agency) versus deference and flowing with nature; outward versus inward orientations. She concludes that it is not so much that positive psychology denies the moral implications of virtues, but that it cannot afford to pay attention to them, due to its empirical approach. She suggests that a greater level of reflexivity could supplement this lacuna.

Reflecting on positive psychology from the perspective of Ignatian spirituality within Christianity, Phyllis Zagano and Kevin Gillespie trace several points of similarity. They also point out that

> while the words used may be the same, the meanings they carry for scientists interested in Positive Psychology and for those pursuing spirituality may diverge considerably, essentially because psychology is rooted in an appeal to reason, whereas authentic Christian spirituality is grounded in a recognition that all depends on God.[63]

This dependence on God is a key component of Christian thinking, arising from its faith in God as Creator. Generally, however, a Catholic approach sees faith and reason as complementary.[64] Looking at it this way, although it is true that the two meanings may not be identical, there is, nevertheless, much that the disciplines can learn from each other in their mutual quest for truth.

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[60]Selvam and Collicutt, "The Ubiquity of the Character Strengths in African Traditional Religion," 2013.

[61]Stephen Joseph, P. Alex Linley, and John Maltby, "Positive Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 9, 3 (2006), 209-212.

[62]Louise Sundararajan, "Happiness Donut: A Confucian Critique of Positive Psychology," *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 25, 1 (2005), 35-60.

[63]Phyllis Zagano and Kevin Gillespie, "Ignatian Spirituality and Positive Psychology," *The Way* 45, 4 (2006), 46.

[64]See, for example, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Chapman, 1993, 39-40, which quotes documents from both the First and the Second Vatican Councils.

One of the contributions that positive psychology can make to religious thinking is that it often includes optimism as a component of hope.[65] Many Christian theologians strongly distinguish between the two, sometimes on the basis of the priority of faith. David Burrell, for example, speaks of optimism as "unfounded hope," suggesting that it is somewhat naïve. Faced with the reality of sin, Christian hope doubts that we "could do any better," because of its "negative assessment of our condition without divine assistance."[66] This sense of "the meaninglessness of human existence apart from Christ," however, need "not involve pessimism with regard to creation," as Edward Schillebeeckx points out. There is, he says, a "fundamental optimism concerning creation" that can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, an optimism that is therefore shared with Judaism. It is based on faith in the presence of the Creator with his creatures and with his people, a presence that is never removed or rescinded. This creation-based optimism "continues to constitute part of revelation" for Christians, even though, in the New Testament, it is "hidden beneath a moral-religious view of life which is caught up with the opposition between the state of perdition and that of salvation, between death and life, sin and redemption."[67] Thus, even though it is the moral and salvific elements of Christian thought that are the most visible, this need not imply a complete break, either with Judaism or with ways of talking about human flourishing in psychology.

Schillebeeckx holds that Christian faith in creation has "a critical and productive force," which, as Philip Kennedy points out, is influenced by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt school. The hope that this faith engenders is not naïve: it is critical of both "overly optimistic and overly pessimistic conceptions of human history and society." At the same time, it is orientated towards the future: the productive force of this faith "frees [people] for their own tasks in the world" and establishes a direction for their action. This way of talking about Christian faith harmonises well with Snyder's account of hope providing pathways towards desired goals and with the sense of purpose that Damon recognises. Further dialogue

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[65]This is an area of debate in psychology, as well as religion. See Maria Miceli and Cristiano Castelfranchi, "Hope: The Power of Wish and Possibility," *Theory & Psychology* 20 (2010), 251-276, esp. 261-262.

[66]David Burrell and Elena Malits, *Original Peace: Restoring God's Creation*, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1997, 25-28.

[67]Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1969, 230-231.

could assist both disciplines in developing a more critical form of optimism as a component of their respective accounts of hope.

What Christianity can offer to positive psychology is another step in the development of hope, incorporating hope for an after-life. This is by no means a negation of Emmons' ultimate concerns, because religion need not separate this life from the next. The idea of eternal life in Christianity is often misunderstood as valuing the next life at the expense of this one, but this is far from being the way that the term is used biblically. Stephen Verney persuasively argues that, in John's gospel, the term indicates a new kind of life that is available now, which transforms every aspect of life as it is lived. As well as this, it offers a new horizon on what can be anticipated at the end of life.[68]

Such an understanding of eternal life can help craft an account of the relation between immanent and transcendent forms of hope, which Unterrainer and others are seeking to develop. In Christianity, this relation can be expressed as hoping for the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom will come in its fullness only at the end of time, giving what Christians call an eschatological character to their hope: "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1). This plays an important part in the critique that Christianity offers to any account of the future that is merely this-worldly: there is a proviso that holds here, since the future that Christians hope for is both 'now' and 'not yet;' it is both ours and God's. This proviso, however, need not be expressed merely as an eschatological proviso, as if the limit to human folly only held at the end of time. If that were the case, Christians would hope that God will establish his kingdom on the ruins of this world, in spite of everything that humanity has done in its search for wellbeing and the fulfilment of our potential. But this is a misunderstanding of the world, of our role in it, and of God. The proviso of the Creator God assures us that, in the midst of our human planning in this world, which is always threatened by failure and fiasco, God is with us. The presence of God is a stimulus to hope, even in the midst of difficulty and disappointment.[69] It encourages us to search for "life [...] to the full" (John 10:10), to work for a better future for our world, to hope for the coming of God's kingdom. It also offers us a share in God's life – a life that we participate in already by virtue of our existence, and a life that grows in us as we flourish. Ultimately, though, it is a life that will come to

[68]Stephen Verney, *Into the New Age*, London: Fount, 1989.

[69]Edward Schillebeeckx, *God Among Us: The Gospel Proclaimed*, London: SCM Press, 1983, 97-99.

its fullest expression in the life of heaven, when "we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is" (1 Jn 3:2).

7. Conclusion

The psychological treatment of 'virtues' that have hitherto been subjects of theology and philosophy might seem rather odd in the ears of the experts of these latter intellectual endeavours. However, it is our view that to consider these human realities as the sole property of some intellectual endeavours and not others would be to impoverish their understanding. In this sense, the psychological treatment of hope remains a necessary approach, even if it is not a sufficient one. On the other hand, to avoid the risk of reductionism, psychology needs to develop a deeper conceptual framework of these virtues with the help of other disciplines, even before they are operationalized as measurements. As we have pointed out, positive psychology has already done some valuable work in grounding the concept of character strengths in philosophical, cultural and religious traditions. Further still, it has much to gain, and much to offer, if an effective interdisciplinary dialogue can be established between these distinctive traditions of enquiry to deepen our understanding of the complexities of the human psyche which includes the soul. The present article has been a modest attempt in contributing to this interdisciplinary endeavour.

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'TRANSCENDENT' GENEALOGICAL AND KINSHIP RELATIONS
Afterlife in African Traditional Religions

Maheshvari Naidu♦

1. Introduction

Ancestor worship, in most instances is positioned within a cosmological worldview that represents a very specific conceptualization of this world, living in this world and life after death for the individual. It speaks to a worldview where there are levels of involvement and genealogical linkage between the living and the dead, as well as the world of the living and the world of the dead. In this perception, a dying person does not go to another world but changes merely his or her physical mode of existence to that of a spiritual one.[1] Mbiti points out that African Traditional Religion is an "ontological phenomenon" that pertains to the question of existence or being, and draws our gaze to the detail that this is a religious worldview where the individual is "immersed in continuous religious participation which starts before birth and continues after death."[2]

> Of all man's (sic) religions, ancestor worship has occupied a place of special interest in anthropology. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that ancestor worship appears so commonly among the peoples studied by anthropologists. Literally scores of ethnographies document the appearance, form, and functions of ancestor worship among specific peoples.[3]

In his early 1975 study from which the above quotation is extracted, Dean Sheils offers a taxonomy of ancestor worship based on what he sees as an 'intensity of involvement of the ancestors with the living' and attempts to relate ancestor worship to a variety of other culture-traits by looking comparatively at data across 114 societies. Sheils approaches his study by initially unpacking an operational definition of ancestor worship

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♦**Dr Maheshvari Naidu** lectures in the discipline of Anthropology in the School of Social Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

[1]Mugambi, J. N. K., *Christianity and African Culture*, Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2002, 51.

[2]Mbiti, J. S., *An Introduction to African Religion*, London: SCM Press, 1975, 19.

[3]Sheils Dean, "Toward a Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Social Forces* 54, 2 (1975), 427-440, 427.

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and offers an exegesis of ancestor worship as "the belief in, and often the propitiation of, the spirits of the dead."[4] Sheils, however, is at pains to direct our critical gaze to, what I consider to be of fundamental importance, the fact that these 'dead' are not merely generalized ghosts or apparitions in the Tylorian tradition, but one's own 'living' genealogical ancestors. Sheils confines ancestor worship to those instances in which there is a genealogical relationship between the spirits and the living.

Sheils' comparatively designed large empirical study reveals that the involvement of the ancestral spirits in human life, while showing some congruence, also shows cross cultural differences. Having worked latitudinally with data across a massive 114 societies, Sheils then sets up a typology of ancestor worship based on the degree to which the ancestors (the dead) involve themselves with their descendants (the living). One tier in this typology is termed 'otiose ancestor worship,' in which the ancestors are believed to exist and are aware of the activities of their living descendants, but abstain from acting in the lives of those descendants. 'Active ancestor worship,' as an alternate typology, exists when the ancestors are implicated in the lives of their descendants, but on a largely capricious basis, for example, compliance or failure with kinship obligations is not linked to rewards or punishments from the ancestors. The strongest form of ancestor worship in this schema is 'supportive ancestor worship,' when the ancestors directly are intimately entangled in the lives of their descendants, and accordingly reward or punish for fulfilling, or conversely failing to fulfil, various kinship obligations. Ancestor worship within African Traditional Religions can be said to, by and large, fit into this last typology of direct involvement.

This paper is a descriptive outline of the manner in which the 'Afterlife' is conceived with African Traditional Religion by offering a discussion and understanding of the role of ancestor worship and the context of a religious Afterlife constructed along genealogical and kinship links. It attempts to situate this discussion within the context of a need for social solidarity and reassurance built along genealogical ties that extend after death. Religion itself is understood as complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic. Like 'culture' within anthropological discourse, it is easier to say what religion is not, as opposed to what religion is. From the early racially chauvinistic and evolutionary definitions of religion, to later Tylorian definitions that aimed to be more inclusive by referring to 'belief'

[4]Sheils, "Toward a Unified Theory of Ancestor Worship," 427.

in spirits, through the vast gamut of theorists and theories of religion, religion has emerged as a fluid and contested phenomenon. The paradigmatic lenses applied to the study of religion have moved from functionalist, to neo-functionalist, to structuralist to interpretivist, and in more recent times, postmodern, deconstructionist and feminist. This paper takes a post-structuralist approach which is believed to allocate greater importance, value and currency to the interpretive and constructivist activities of the actors or believers involved in the religion. Such an interpretive-constructivist heuristic enables one to excavate the meanings embedded in particular situations for those participating in it. Interpretive-constructivist researchers maintain that there are multiple constructed realities, and accept that the meaning of particular forms of social life need to be interpreted and thus reconstructed, in order to be understood by the researcher. The paper concludes by attempting to illustrate that such an interpretation and reassembling also allows us to construct an understanding of the contemporary significance of African Traditional Religions and aspects of afterlife and ancestor worship that show up as continuities within African Indigenous Churches and Charismatic Pentecostal Christianity.

2. African Traditional Religions in the Social Sciences

African Traditional Religion within the Social Sciences has moved from being largely ignored as a viable autonomous subject, to being studied at the periphery of religious studies, to being now distinctly positioned in the study of world religions. The study of African Traditional Religion has also extended beyond the spatial boundary of the African continent, with Religion Studies and Comparative Religion departments in the USA and Europe offering it as a disciplinary choice of study at tertiary level. There is moreover renewed interest in the study of Africa's past within the context of the advent of Neo-colonialism. The agitation for academic redress and for African scholarship that is rooted in local social realities have also opened a flood of opportunities and a rehabilitated desire to study the traditional religions and cultures of Africa. In addition, there have been intellectual attempts to integrate the study of African Traditional Religion on the continent and in the Diaspora, especially in the area of high impact publications in regional and international journals, either by individual African or non-African scholars in Africa and in the Diaspora, or as collaborative research work between scholars in Africa and in the Diaspora. The University of Michigan in USA and the University of Bern

in Germany have dynamic African Studies Centres, and are but a small example of such centres that dot the international tertiary landscape. International conferences on African Traditional Religions also bring together scholars of religion from dispersed corners of the world, including scholars of African Religions.[5]

African Traditional Religions refers to the indigenous religion(s) of the Africans which was handed over orally through the generations, until recent attempts at documentation. The overarching worldview of African Traditional Religions presents a unique understanding of this world and the next, in a manner that offers a natural collapse of a Cartesian dualistic bifurcation of this world and the next. In the context of the religious architecture of African traditional beliefs, there is no polarising dichotomy between the world of the living and the world of the dead. I have mentioned African Traditional Religions in the plural for the simple reason that there is no one single African community but a rich cluster of plural African groups dispersed across sub-Saharan Africa, each with richly unique cosmological and religio-cultural features that distinguish them, and place and root them to their geographical contexts of origin.

The title 'African Traditional Religions' thus presents an assumed, but imaginary homogenous landscape of the (multiple) religions of the African peoples. Though it is true that many features of religion and its practice are similar across Africa, it would be fallacious to assume some sort of essentialism and that all African religion(s) is the same. Hence, it has been suggested by scholars working within African Religious studies, that the more accurate/proximate label for the religions of Africa, is the pluralistic form of 'African Religions' or 'African Traditional/Indigenous Religions,' to reflect the rich contextual and geo-spatial plurality within the continent's religious landscape.

The main shared and overarching characteristics of African Traditional Religions are:

i. Belief in a Supreme Being: In almost all African religious traditions there is recognized a Supreme Being who is Creator, such as Nyankopon (Akan: Dependable Companion), Olodumare (Yoruba: Supreme) and Chineke (Igbo: Creator).

ii. Belief in spirit beings and smaller deities: The supernatural realities of the African pantheon consist not just of a Supreme Being but also a multitude of benevolent and malevolent deities and spirit beings.

[5]See "Theology of African Traditional Religion Module description," http://www.nou.edu.ng/noun/NOUN_OCL/pdf/cth%20692.pdf.

The Supreme Being is universal but the spirits and deities are local and in some traditions there are also the smaller deities, which inhabit trees, stones and rocks and other animate objects.

iii. Belief in the finitude of the human person: the human person is finite and vulnerable and therefore stands in need of the assistance and protection from the supernatural realm of spirits. Prayers, rites, rituals and sacrifices are thus organized as means of solicitation of help from the transcendent realms of health, power and protection.

iv. Belief in mystical causality: Africans live in a world in which things do not happen by chance. In Africa, aetiology and diagnosis often asks the following basic question: 'who is the cause of my predicament?' Events have causes and so the African universe is an intentional one in which misfortunes in particular occur through the evils of witchcraft, curses and sin.[6]

v. Belief in ancestor worship: The belief in ancestors is of critical concern to us. Within the context of many of the African Traditional Religions, the ancestors are the living elders of the 'lineage' who have transitioned from a physical existence into the realm of spirits. John Mbiti refers to them as 'living-dead' because, although no longer physically alive, it is believed that they participate in the activities of the living as custodians of morality and are believed to be the sources of aid to their living relatives and kin.

3. Ancestor Worship

The African scholar K. A. Opoku points out that "African traditional religion is practiced by millions of Africans" at present and it is therefore a "contemporary reality" which exists in the ethnographic present.[7] There

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[6]For an understanding as deconstructed to students wishing to study African Traditional Religions, see description of "Theology of African Traditional Religion Module," http://www.nou.edu.ng/noun/NOUN_OCL/pdf/cth%20692.pdf.

[7]Opoku, K. A., *West African Traditional Religion*, Accra: FEP International Private Ltd., 1978, 9. It is the aggregate of indigenous belief systems and practices which existed in Africa prior to the coming of Christianity and Islam and to which millions of Africans still adhere covertly or overtly. The term "traditional" is used to refer to the technique of cultural transmission, that is, oral tradition – stories, myths and proverbs – that are used in passing this religion from generation to generation. Beliefs are passed on to posterity through songs, folktales, dances, shrines, and festivals. African scholar K. A. Opoku explains that the term, 'traditional' indicates a fundamentally indigenous value system that it has its own pattern, with its own historical inheritance and tradition from the past.

exists diverse plurality in the way the world, life, death and the afterlife is conceptualised. Beyond this rich diversity, however, is an overarching narrative common to most of the African people, that of the belief in ancestors.[8] 'Belief in the ancestors' is thus one 'universal' brick in the conceptual architectural matrix of African Traditional Religions.

Ancestor 'worship' is the belief in human spirits who continue their life after death and continue to exert an influence over their living descendants. The ancestral spirits are seen as wishing to remain in close contact with their surviving family, to whom they are able to reveal themselves through dreams and diviners/healers. The living, in turn are meant to reciprocate this care bestowed on them, by showing the ancestors respect and obedience and by offering (living animal) sacrifices on particular occasions.

We can thus subsume ancestor worship as 'active ancestor worship' in Sheils' typology, and it bears noting that the dead (who go on to become ancestors), have an influence on the lives of their own descendants only. Likewise, none but their own descendants need pay any attention to them in this relationship of reciprocity. In contemporary practice people occupy themselves chiefly with the spirits of ancestors recently dead and well remembered. And the group that participates in ancestral rites is the family group with a common patrilineal grandfather.[9]

A substantial number of Africans are believers in ancestral worship[10] and honour their dead by burying them within the proximate spatial

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[8]Another suggestion to describe the religion of Africa has been African Traditional Religions, the emphasis being on the 'traditional' aspect of the religion as opposed to other religions which due to the process of contextualization are now construed as African religions too. An example is the reality of African Christianity and African Islam.

[9]That is why it is most essential for a person to have ancestors in the male line. Without these, he would be forgotten and forsaken after death.

[10]According to some scholars the term ancestral worship does not adequately express the ancestral rites in African Traditional Religions. In this regard, many African authors have suggested alternative terms such as communion with ancestors. This includes ancestors as instruments between God and man and elderly members of the family who are venerated and not worshipped. Hence the term of submission and pleading supplication which appears in prayers to God and the deities are significantly absent. In addition, they may be rebuked, insulted or even threatened. For the purposes of this paper, I have retained the more popular term 'ancestor worship' with the understanding that there are more elements of veneration than worship as conventionally understood.

domain of their homes.[11] The belief that feeds this social practice is the religious conviction that families and relatives who have shared their homes, deserve to be buried where they lived, and not in a remote, impersonal cemetery. Since Africans articulate much of the routine, day to day aspects of life (illness, misfortune as well as good fortune) by communicating with their ancestors to seek advice and guidance, it is understood as logical to create a burial space where the ancestor and that advice is more accessible. There is thus a perpetuation of the tradition of being close to their dead, both physically and spiritually. Traditional religion is thus, understandably, claimed as beginning 'at the kraal' or homestead. This perhaps makes sense when we understand that the cattle kraal is the equivalent on some levels as an 'African temple,' or central sacred space, where it is believed that all the ancestors have some form of contact with the living.

This contact and 'closeness' is enhanced and solidified though reiterative ritual actions and performances which are performed and are intended to link the living members of the family with the dead. There is a belief in, *Umvelingqangi*, the High God in the local isi-Zulu language, thought of as (theologically) superior to all other beings, and believed to be the Creator of all things. Within this normative framework, God is the Supreme Being, and various ascriptions and names are accorded to him depending on the particular linguistic and religio-cultural specificities of the particular African community, such as *Onyame* (Supreme Being in Akan culture in Ivory Coast), *Mawuga* (Great God in Ewe culture in Ghana) or *Oludumare* (Supreme, in the Yoruba language of Nigeria). God is, however, represented as being too remote and in a sense inaccessible to be directly in the lives of the individuals (on a day to day basis) or to be directly approached by the living. Ancestral spirits are thus often asked to intercede with God, on behalf of the living.

It is believed that the ancestors, even though dead, continue to live (or wish to live) the same kind of life they led when they were on earth, and as such they require the same material artefacts of food and drink to sustain them, even in their spiritual state of existence. Libation which is the pouring of water, food or drink to the ground is therefore used as a specialized means of communication with the ancestors.

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[11]Since many Africans live in urban areas they are at liberty to bury families and relatives in cemeteries. But some of the Africans still take bodies back to their place of origin in the rural areas and bury them within the premises of their homes.

There are cases in particular African communities where it is believed that the naming of the descendant with the name of his ancestor makes it possible for the ancestor to continue to live in his descendant. The belief is pervasive and deeply entrenched that the ancestor will continue to survive as an ancestor, only on condition that he is not forgotten, i.e. if his descendants will communicate regularly with him through prayer performances and ritual offering. Hence, it is popularly said that the African desires to have many children who will remember him and ritually communicate with him/her. The ancestor, on their part, is believed to accrue benefits for the living kin such as health and a successful and productive long life. As elders, the ancestors are thought of as the 'owners' of the land, fertilizing the earth and 'causing' the food to grow. The living-dead receive requests from the living and, reciprocally request offerings from the living.

The linking of particular descendents to particular ancestors is also vital as it serves to link the living with not only the immediate ancestor, but the very lineage of the ancestors. The narrative that follows below is a description of the context of sacrifice to the ancestors, as shared by an informant: The sacrifice is a ritual dedication, 'tying' and linking the descendant (the living) to the ancestor (the dead). It also reveals behaviours by the ancestors typical in this world, where one 'fights' for ownership and proprietary claim on the part of one's lineage.

4. *Ukungeniswa* (Dedication Ritual)

Ukungeniswa is a ceremony where a young person or child is dedicated to a certain family ancestor. This ceremony is usually performed when ancestors from two families 'fight' for ownership of an individual. This 'fight' in the ancestral realm for ownership of the living descendent, according to the believers, manifests and reveals itself in the physical realm in the child who is chronically ill. This is how the family knows what ritual to offer up to appease the ancestors.

Children are of course born of two people, the mother and the father from two different families; with each family having its own lineage of ancestors. When a child is born, one ancestor becomes dominant which may anger the other ancestor. In some cases it is not only the ancestors who 'fight' for the child's ownership, but the families as well. Should this happen and one family (even if it is one member) curses the child and wishes it misfortune, the ancestors (of the cursor) 'turn away' from the child, bringing bad luck (this is usually the paternal side especially if the

child was born out of wedlock). When this occurs, the child has to be dedicated to the maternal ancestors, and this disconnects the child from its paternal ancestors.

This fight between ancestors is usually seen or detected by a *sangoma* or a prophet who would have foreseen the misfortunes of the child. For this ceremony to be acceptable before the ancestors, the child needs to be taken to a 'prophet' who administers herbs and water that has been specially prayed over. This water is used to 'clean/purify' the family lawn which is believed to have been stained by witchdoctors. The lawn is watered for three weeks. During this time the child wears a string around its waist. Once the purifying is done, the family prepares Zulu beer which serves as a sign to the ancestors that they (ancestors) will be 'eating.'

Money to buy a goat and chicken has to be given to the child's grandfather or uncle as they are considered the head of the family. On the day that the goat and chickens are to be bought, incense is burnt notifying the ancestors that they (uncles) will be going to purchase the sacrifice or their 'food' as it is referred to. A day before the ceremony (usually on a Friday which is considered auspicious) the goat is slaughtered and dedicated to the ancestors. This is done so as to ask the ancestors to relay the message to God. If, within the family there is a member who is considered 'gifted' and able to communicate with the ancestors, that person would receive a message from the ancestors indicating whether they accept the child or not. The child is always accepted; or rather the messages relayed by the 'prophet' always indicate that the child has been accepted. After this ceremony, the child is considered to belong solely to the maternal family. The child then changes its surname to that of maternal family (Informant Nokwanda Nzuza).

The (male) ancestor[12] is, in many ways, regarded as the father of the clan, lineage or ethnic group. As a father, he should be loved, cared for and protected. In African belief system, there appears to be a rich and dense

[12]While female ancestors also exist, and informants were clear that both males and females can attain to the level of ancestor, and could be offered ritual sacrifices, in most instances they would refer to the ancestors in the masculine form, and as 'father.' This appeared to be duplicated in much literature on ancestor worship, by African scholars like John Mbiti and later 'western' scholars who draw from such works. One can speculate and say that this appears an unconscious modelling perhaps of the fact that many African cultures are patriarchal and much of the terminology tends to favour the masculine. See Idowu E. Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, London: SCM Press, 1973; Awolalu J. O., "What Is African Traditional Religion?" *Studies in Comparative Religion* 10, 2 (1976), 1-10.

network of relationships. Everyone is related with the other in this network; God, the deities, ancestors, the lineage, the clan, the ethnic group, are interconnected to each other. Any 'breakage' in this complex webbed relationship is believed as foreboding trouble for all who meant to be connected. Thus, any misfortune or evil is traditionally interpreted as an omen of warning or punishment from the ancestors. The ancestors are believed to be good spirits, who look after the welfare of their kinsmen and families, and would according to this rationale, warn in the case of a potential transgression. They are conceptualised and believed to be closer to God and therefore able to act as intermediaries between (the more inaccessible) God, and members of their families.

As pointed out, according to African Traditional worldview, death does not totally bring an end to one's existence. It only brings a change of life in a new world.[13] According to Mbiti,

> They return to their human families from time to time, and share meals with them, however symbolically, they know and have the interest in what is going on in their families... They are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately an offence against the forefathers, who in that capacity act as the invisible police of the families and communities.[14]

What is also prominent in this way of thinking is a strong sense of community, expressed by participation in the life of the community into which the individual is introduced by various initiation rites. This accounts for the deep sense of the family, shown by the attachment to the family and the bond with the ancestors. The funeral rites performed for them on the part of their descendants, have facilitated them in reaching the spiritual home of the clan, which is (experienced as being) in intimate communion with its living members. The followers of African Traditional Religions believe that the ancestors know and have a personal interest in what is going on in their families. They are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately an offence against the forefathers, who in that capacity act as agents of surveillance

[13]It should be noted that there are two categories of death: that is bad or good death – the death of the young and of the aged. Death of the young person is not considered a good death, as is death by violent means or through intense illness such as HIV/AIDS. If one dies a bad death, one is not given certain funeral rites. Such dead person is not venerated as ancestor.

[14]Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, 83.

(al la Foucault) invisible police of the families and communities.[15] The living-dead communicate with the living by revelation, dreams, calamity, ecstasy and trance, possession prophecy and divination.

Sangomas are the traditional healers and are seen as being capable of providing a link between the living, the dead, and the spirits. One of the informants described the context of the sangoma's involvement, based on what she had witnessed often. The informant described that,

> Most sangomas use drumming and dancing to help channel the ancestors. When the spirit enters the body, the sangoma's voice will change because a particular ancestor will enter her. Sometimes she [sangoma] will speak in tongues or a different accent and we then know she is "possessed." The sangoma can communicate with the spirits as well as the ancestors.

Indeed, much of this communication through sangomas and diviners, is based on the fact that the living expect special benefits from their ancestors; protection from sickness, death or other mishap, and the acquisition of various benefits, such as long life, great wealth and many children. This sort of reciprocal relationship extends beyond this realm, and speaks to a kind of social and religious capital that transcends social relationships within the context of this world. An ancestor is, therefore, expected to be faithful to their earthly kin, who expect in return a favourable response or reward for their prayers and articulation of ritual donations and performances to them. The ancestors, on their part, are said to desire frequent or regular contact with their earthly relatives, and are even believed to visit them through mediums, or to have direct union with them through possession.

5. A Unique Traditional Outlook on the Afterlife Made Contemporary

The understanding and outlook of life after death within African Traditional Religions is unique in the kind of (mutual) continuance one is offered with this world and one's relatives in this world, that is able to transcend death. This outlook cuts through any kind of Cartesian dualism, and stitches together this world and the next. A post-structural approach allows us to see beyond binary disparate structures of *life* and *death*, *the living* and *the dead* and in a sense 'get inside' the understanding of the believer. It allows us to see that, in terms of the theological tenets of African Traditional Religions, the living and their ancestors, form a totality

[15]Onwubiko O. A., *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, Enugu: Snaap Press, 1991, 34.

in which solidarity is lived and expressed through prayer and ritual, and in which human and 'cosmic' solidarity is (perpetually) engaged and sustained.[16]

For me this point of *'cosmic solidarity'* finds it simple and powerfully eloquent expression in the fact that after death, the human person is accepted and understood as continuing to live on as a spirit, in a relationship of mutual fellowship of interests amongst a group, in this case a lineage and kinship group. The network of relationships that characterizes human existence is not seen as being interrupted, but stretches into the cosmic dimension of the beyond, in a sense, and "death is a necessary door through which the living pass in order to take up the inevitable role as the living dead," in the wider cosmos. Death is therefore the "transition to the final destiny of all men and women." Mbiti affirms that "life goes on beyond the grave."[17] Death is thus understood by the adherent as "an inevitable event in the personal history of every living person..." Though inevitable, death does not terminate human existence, but is cognised as a moment of passage to the afterlife.[18] One of the informants shared with me "Life does not end with the moment of physical death but continues," while another said that it was "movement to a different stage" ... "to the place of the forefathers."

The point that John Burton makes is that "the African emphasis is not so much on how the dead continue to live (in ontological terms) but on the manner in which they affect the living."[19] What this means in simple existential and experiential terms is that there is no overly elaborate philosophical or metaphysical discussion and description on *how* it is possible that there is an ontic continuity for the dead, in as much as what that ontological continuity means for the living. Rather at the level of explanation, there is discussion and aspiration passed through the generations, orally, as to how this can inspire the living to aspire to the good life (and the outcome of attaining to ancestorhood themselves). There is also oral discussion through myth and storytelling, and ritual performances and observances, as reminders that life continues beyond

[16]Luhrmann T. M., "A Hyperreal God and Modern Belief: Toward an Anthropological Theory of Mind," *Current Anthropology* 53, 4 (2012), 371-395.

[17]Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, 119.

[18]Onwubiko, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, 34.

[19]Burton John W., "Living with the Dead: Aspects of the Afterlife in Nuer and Dinka Cosmology (Sudan)," *Anthropos* 73, 1/2 (1978), 141-160, 142.

physical death and that kinship relations and reciprocal relations also continue seamlessly.

Burton emphasizes that it is the role of relationship (and remembering one adds), as a way of affirming life that is vital, and sees the goal of life as maintaining and joining "that cosmic web that holds and sustains all things and beings, to be a part of the integral mutuality of things."[20] A 'living dead' is still considered as a member of the family and is in the state of personal immortality.[21] The living dead (ancestor) can help the family and the community during a crisis. Conversely, the ancestor can also cause trouble if certain rituals have not been performed properly or if there are some violations of community laws.

Among the spirits, the ancestors create a special category on their own. They are those who have lived exemplary life and who fulfilled all social and religious duties as understood by their community. Because of their good life they are remembered by the living. To become an ancestor is the best one can expect after death.[22] It is something that one aspires to considering that living an immoral life is said to preclude one from becoming an ancestor. This makes sense if one considers that the 'immoral' person (as conceived with African religio-cultural normatives) would not be afforded much respect while alive, much less when dead. It is also to be reiterated that it is the crucial act of remembering, respecting and offering ritual that solidifies the existence of the ancestors, or else they are forgotten and fade away. No one would want to remember and respect or perform ritual observances to someone considered immoral. The length of time one is remembered depends directly on the quality of life that the person had while alive. There is thus an embedded imperative to live the so called good and moral life (according to African traditional normatives) Nkemnkia says that "the necessary condition to remain always alive and present in the memory of the living is to lead a good and virtuous life. What each African fears most is to be forgotten by the living ones, the parents and the human race."[23]

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[20] Burton, "Living with the Dead," 144.

[21] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heineman, 1969, 163.

[22] Zahan D., *The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979; Taylor, J. V., *Christian Presence Amid African Religions*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001.

[23] Nkemnkai M. N., *African Vitalogy*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1999, 119.

Thus, the social cohesion built into the webbed network of solidarity and relationship, while extending into the cosmic beyond, still stays connected to the *'here and now'* in encouraging the living to live the virtuous life. The social cohesion is also articulated in the by now popularised notion of *ubuntu*, which is the African humanist ethic of fellowship and relationship to each other. It is a way of understanding oneself through a collective context of interconnectedness. This interconnectedness is in turn meant to be articulated through 'good' social reciprocal relations.

6. Conclusion

It can be clearly discerned that the notion of life after death plays an imperative and embedded role within the matrix of African Traditional Religions. It affirms the inner coherence of African religious worldview where the person is central and remains also a prominent figure after death, as an ancestor. Such a notion stresses also the role of the community, and one's life on earth as being defined through belonging to a community. As an ancestor, one continues to be useful to the community, because he/she remains a part of that community, even as a dead person and is able to be called upon to mediate between the descendent and God.

While a substantial number of African communities in sub Saharan Africa are converts to Christianity, who express a distance from and discomfort with the perceived conflicting aspects of African Traditional Religions and monotheistic, non-idolatrous Christianity, it has to be emphasised that many others still adhere to tenets and beliefs of ancestor worship, even if they practise Christianity. In South Africa, as in many other parts of Africa, there is a distinct 'type' of post colonial Christianity that has come to be encapsulated with the emerging African Independent Churches (AIC[24]). Members within these churches embrace both Christianity and African Traditional Religions as a syncretised religious form and do not see or experience these two religious worldviews as mutually exclusive or conflicting. Scholars have theorised that such Churches and forms of Christianity, initiated by Africans in Africa and not by missionaries from outside the continent, offer bridges back to aspects of African Traditional Religions. I feel that this is highly plausible and for

[24]More recently AIC has been re-understood, with the term 'African' being understood as place or origin, rather than place of location, as many AICs can now also be found in other parts of the world with Diaspora African communities.

me, it indexes the importance of aspects like ancestor worship whereby African communities themselves believe that ritual articulation and performances help to maintain a sense of social cohesion and kinship. And as pointed out by a colleague, without falling prey to over essentialising, the communion of saints, the mystical body of Christ and praying for the dead are aspects of the Christian faith that may be understood by some as showing 'family resemblance' with the ATR's ancestor worship.

Many Africans, especially the migrant and transnational Africans within South Africa also belong to Pentecostal Churches. Pentecostalism, as practiced by these adherents allows for aspects of divinised (or demonised) nature as well as recognition of multiple levels of spirits that are able to affect the individual in this world. So while Pentecostalism is certainly not synonymous to African Traditional Religions, there is enough of a perceived theological congruency (by the adherent) for her/him to be comfortable with aspects of ancestor worship, even as a practicing Pentecostal Christian.

Understandably then, one area of particular interest for Africanists and anthropologists has been the somewhat "paradoxical relationship between charismatic Christianity and traditional religion,"[25]with points of religious and theological contact as well as points of divergences. Much of the anthropologist, Birgit Meyer's work with the Ewe in Ghana has also focused on this paradox.[26] On the one hand, born again Christians reject the African traditional religious practices and non-Christian spirits as inventions and interventions of Satan. Yet, on the other hand, much empirical and ethnographic work among people like the Ewe of Ghana and in the city of Iringa in Tanzania reveals deep seated practices of aspects of ancestor worship by staunch African Christians. Thus notions of rupture and breaking with the past and maintaining the past and the ways of the ancestors both figure prominently in the rhetoric of conversion. Anthropologists like Birgit Meyer and Martin Lindhardt point out that charismatic Christianity, through "processes of diabolisation" and the emphasis on spiritual or mystical warfare, in fact contribute to the preservation and renewed significance of traditional religion.[27] This is

[25]Lindhardt Martin, "The Ambivalence of Power and Charismatic Christianity and Occult Forces in Urban Tanzania," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 22, 1 (2009), 37-54.

[26]Meyer Birgit, "Christianity in Africa: From Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33 (2004), 447-474.

[27]Lindhardt, "The Ambivalence of Power and Charismatic Christianity," 38.

borne out by ethnographic work as well as anecdotal narratives. Many transnational African colleagues, who are followers of Pentecostalism, recount stories of understandings of social processes of economics and even personal health, in terms of 'bewitchment' and thus in need of traditional remedies or 'cures'. These traditional remedies are in turn traced back to African Traditional Religions and a very particular religio-cultural worldview as discussed earlier, which points to mystical causality in explaining good fortune as well as mishap and misfortune. Thus many followers of Christianity do not experience any conflict since this understanding (of mystical causality) finds place in both African Traditional Religions and Pentecostalism. By seeking recourse in African traditional remedy and cure, they are in a sense renewing a connection to ATR, on some levels.

Linhardts's ethnographic work in Tanzania also allows us to see beyond a simple continuity/discontinuity dualism and conceive of an active relation between charismatic Christianity (or even African Indigenous Churches), and African Traditional Religions in terms of an ongoing mutual influence. For me this speaks directly to the experiential importance of the aspects of African Traditional Religions around which a strong African group (or interconnected 'ubuntu') identity is constructed.

For most, if not all Africans, religion is an essential part of their everyday life and they articulate this, as many informants shared, in popular terms, as "my culture" and "my way of life." Ancestor worship as a religio-cultural practice comes to be integrated and incorporated by many African converts to Christianity. It can in turn be advanced that this is based, in large part, on the powerful continuity it offers between this world and the next through the genealogical kinship ties and the notion of 'living dead' or ancestors, who are accessible in spatio-temporal terms in the 'here' and the 'now', and able to take care of their descendants' well being. This conceptualisation of the Afterlife is also highly attractive in as much as it is pragmatic, as it offers the African believers a kind of cosmic solidarity by offering a known and traceable genealogical link and relations with kin, who can act as powerful intermediaries between them and God.

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THE 'WORKING-DEAD' IN NYONGO OCCULT ECONOMY IN CAMEROONIAN SOCIETY

Vivian Besem Ojong♦

1. Introduction

Since the late 1980s, following the economic crisis and the subsequent devaluation of the Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) franc, there has been a sharp increase in nyongo accusations in Cameroon. Nyongo falls within the anthropological discourse of occult. The term shrouds a multiplicity of references, including that which is concealed, obscure, mysterious, secret, sinister or forbidden.[1] Nyongo has been identified in Pool's work as "national witchcraft."[2] It is no secret that the power of the occult is subject to some human manipulation; which is often practiced in secret, especially in nyongo where occult powers are used to enslave others. The desire to become rich suddenly has driven some Cameroonians to turn to nyongo. They benefit from the afflicted by using the abilities of the latter to slave for them as ''living dead,'' an equivalent postmodern terminology – zombies, after their presumed death.[3] It is believed that persons involve in nyongo are able to kill others, especially their own relatives, and to use their bodies to work for them in an invisible town on Mount Kupe in Bakossi country.[4]

Information about nyongo is spread through rumours about the secret sources of people's wealth. I am of the opinion that nyongo practice should be recognised as a well-established genre in Cameroonian society. On the basis of this and for the purposes of this article, I place nyongo discourse in its contemporary context in which the ethnography collected and the stories told are embedded. The ethnography consisted of interviews conducted among twenty Cameroonians.

♦**Dr. Vivian Besem Ojong**, a senior Lecturer in Anthropology, is currently the Head of Department of Anthropology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

[1]Kiernan J., *The Power of the Occult in Modern Africa: Continuity and Innovation in the Renewal of African Cosmologies*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006.

[2]Pool Robert, *Dialogue and Interpretation of Illness: Conversations in a Cameroonian Village*, Oxford: Berg, 1994.

[3]Nyamnjoh F., "Images of Nyongo amongst Bamenda Grassfielders in Whiteman Kontri," *Citizenship Studies* 9, 3 (2005), 241-691.

[4]Ardener E., "The Plantations and the People of Victoria Division" in S. Ardener, ed., *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast 1500–1970*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1960.

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Nyongo is an emergent form of witchcraft whereby witches do not cannibalise victims but transform them to some form of zombie and use them in wealth creation. Commonly known as "the witchcraft of wealth"[5] Geschiere has elaborated how these witchcraft entrepreneurs accumulate wealth (by occult means) through zombies' unpaid labour.

The word "zombie"[6] refers to the 'living dead'. In folklore, zombies are portrayed as innocent victims who are raised in a comatose trance from their graves by malevolent sorcerers, and led to distant farms or villages where they toil indefinitely as slaves. Zombies are recognisable by their docile nature, their glassy, empty eyes, and by the evident absence of will, memory, and emotion. Part of their souls may also be captured by the sorcerers. Zombies can only return to the world of the living upon the death of their masters. Accounts are sometimes cited of actual people who have undergone this ordeal, were declared dead, and later turned up at the homes of their kin.

In Cameroonian society, there are two schools of thought on the aesthetics of wealth, power and success. There are those who believe that if anyone is diligent enough, no matter their background, they can become wealthy, powerful and successful, while the other school believe that only those from wealthy, powerful and successful families can actually succeed in life. Irrespective of the school of thought, it is generally believed that to achieve this status in Cameroonian society, one needs help. However, there are contestations as to where this help should come from. Some practice nyongo for financial power, others for social power while others engage in it for political power. Rumour holds that people in different regions in Cameroon practice nyongo for different reasons. The Bamileke practice it for economic power and success in business, while people from the coastal region practice it for social reasons.

Godwin, a 42 years old businessman in Durban, shared a story of the mysterious death of a famous literary scholar at the University of Buea on the 22 of November 2007, who supposedly died of nyongo and was seen in Nigeria a few months after his death. His death was associated with social nyongo because he was too intelligent (he received his PhD from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria within two years of registration, when three years is the norm).

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[5]Geschiere P., "Witchcraft and Modernity: Thoughts about a Strange Complicity" in Kiernan, *The Power of the Occult in Modern Africa*, 45-62.

[6]Colin Blakemore and Shelia Jennett, "zombie," *The Oxford Companion to the Body*, 2001. http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O128-zombie.html, 13April 2012.

2. Informants' Rationalisation of Nyongo

This article is based on fieldwork conducted in South Africa among Cameroonian migrants. The article probes through the use of the perception-based method to capture their perceptions and experiences of nyongo. Twenty people were interviewed for this research but the information used was based on the inclusion criteria which privileged the depth and richness of individual interviews. The snowball method of sampling was employed since the informants all come from the same country of origin. Ethnographically positioned, data was collected and analysed through the use of critical ethnography. The information collected shows the different types of nyongo as well as its manifestations. This feeds into the diverse perceptions as the paper will show. Below are excerpts from some of the informants, which attest to the complex nature and meaning of nyongo occult in Cameroonian society.

2.1. Beatrice

> According to my understanding, it is a group that uses powers from the devil to get money and influence. The group has secrets and such secrets are only known to members. The sources of power vary for each group and the rules will be based on what the particular demon giving the group its powers demand. There are even Cameroonians who go to Nigeria to join different occult groups. It is said that even the president of the country and all the ministers and all those in different high positions belong to these occult groups. In the past when we were growing up there used to be fewer people than they are in nyongo today. In each society people could identify who is in nyongo and who is not. To the extent that they even made it a common talk: 'if you can only know you are a rich man then you have been labelled a nyongo man.' This was because some people would also out of jealousy label others in their community nyongo people. Recently, the issue of nyongo has increased enormously. You even find youths in their 30s and 20s who are said to be in nyongo groups; especially those youths who are in businesses. Some join these groups involuntarily as they do not even know that the groups that the groups they are joining are occult groups.

2.2. Agbor

> Nyongo is widely practiced in Cameroon and has grown more popular recently, though it is said that it is more common in some ethnic groups than others. For example everyone generally knows

that Bamileke are more into occultism. And in Bamenda where I come from everyone say that Akum people also are involved in nyongo a lot. I wouldn't know if nyongo is practiced differently but all I know is that whether they do it this way or that way, it is still the same thing. They kill people for money. Many people I know have died through nyongo, from friends to family members.

2.3. Angeline

People who die through nyongo often appear as ghosts because their spirits are not at rest. They are crying for vengeance, for justice to be done. Though some people say that they go and appear in some places and work for the occult people but I'm not sure about this. There is a man who sells sifters in my village and they said that man is a 'die wokup.' That is, someone who had died through nyongo from somewhere else and appeared in my village and is selling and that all his money go to those people. He doesn't have any family or friend. No one has ever visited him. He just works every day. Yes I think they will eventually die. For, if they are living then they will die some day.

2.4. Valerie

Nyongo is commonly called an occult group of individuals who trade human soul for money, possessions and business purposes. Some people enter this group deliberately because they want a fast way of getting what they want out of life. Others go there unknowingly and once in, there's no turning back. It is either you join them or they kill you. Normally in Cameroon they believe people who die in nyongo do all the cheap jobs, harloting, labourers, farming, etc.

2.5. Melvis

Nyongo is a kind of secret society that people go into because they want to become rich. But they have to do bad things such as killing other people like friends and family members in order to use their blood to make money. Sometimes they even exchange people's destinies; that is, they may disguise themselves like beggars and go to the street, and anyone who helps them and gives them money they take it to their society and drag the person's wealth. The person will work very hard but will always be poor as all their money and luck will be disappearing spiritually and going to the nyongo people so they will become rich. Nyongo people are rich. And if they exchange

someone's destiny that person will be poor while they are rich. They are also wicked. They do not want to help people for nothing, if a friend or family member asks for help they will keep promising and never give. Sometimes they will prefer to make that person who is asking them for help to join their society. Some groups do not make innocent people their victims. Except that you take their money or something of theirs they cannot kill you; but with others they will kill you whether or not you take their money or not.

3. Types of Nyongo

There are different kinds of nyongo as far as the Cameroonian society is concerned. In as much as wealth, success and power are the main reasons why people engage in nyongo practices, there are some kinds of nyongo associated specifically with some of these aspects while others are associated with other concepts which will be examined below.

The Bamenda Grassfields people differentiate between various categories of nyongo or witchcraft. There, witchcraft is as much a source and resource of personal and collective power or powerlessness as it is a call for "domesticated agency" against various forms of exploitation, marginalization, inequality and individualism[7] In Bum, a village in the North West region of Cameroon there are two kinds of nyongo: the Awung and the Msa. Awung is identifiable mainly through words and actions. Members are seen as jealous and destructive, as they eat rather than slave their victims mysteriously and their victims must be kin, as they are expected to prove intimacy, and it is dangerous to victimize strangers. Members can enhance their power through this and also protect themselves against other nyongo practitioners with whom relations are of mutual fear and distrust. Nyamnjoh continues that Msa on its part is an omnipresent mysterious world of beauty, abundance, marvels and infinite possibilities, inhabited by very wicked, hostile and vicious people. It is visible only to the members who alone can visit it anytime, anywhere, and who can conjure it up to appear for the innocent or non members to glimpse. Everywhere in this community Msa is above all, an ambivalent place where good and bad, pleasure and pain are all intertwined. Its inhabitants are both the source of admiration and envy, especially for their material abundance. Msa is like a market, complete with traders and buyers, a bazaar where many come but where, unfortunately, few are rewarded with

[7]Nyamnjoh F., "Images of Nyongo amongst Bamenda Grassfielders in Whiteman Kontri," *Citizenship Studies* 9, 3 (2005), 241-691.

clear-cut choices. To get what one wants, one must bargain and pay for it. But the only currency in Msa is the human being, euphemistically known as "goat" or "fowl." Villains tether their victims at Msa like goats or fowl, hoping for the best while risking the worst, as everything good or bad from Msa is believed to proliferate like a virus once acquired.

In other parts of Cameroon as described by Harries,[8] Ekong is the most widespread form of nyongo today. It is performed by members, who accept money from their clients and then provide them with slaves. Their victims can be seen to weaken and finally die, while others get rich without apparent reason. But even before they are dead, the Ekong victims can be used. For the Douala, every person has an invisible double, which can be bewitched and transported to work for his or her owner even as the person is lying visibly on his bed. The connection between those that die and those that accumulate wealth is one of cause and effect, proof being provided by people being returned from the dead by nganga (healers) who can see the occult slave trade.

To add to this, according to some participants of the research, there are many kinds of nyongo with names unknown but which can be identified through their activities. In some places, for example, village local champions belong to nyongo houses as a thing of pride, while in other societies in the stakes of each nyongo house or group, identifies it. There are nyongo groups for poor or seemingly poor people, for the average in the society and some for the elite class. For some membership is restricted to the kind of influence you have in the society. One thing stands out clear as far as nyongo is concerned, no matter the kind that its members or practitioners seek to sever links with kin as far as their wealth is concerned but mend things with them in relation to family ties. Indeed, the fact that witchcraft accusations usually occur among kins is indicative of how much people in the region are bound up in issues of solidarity, intimacy, trust and the extent to which they are implicated in anxieties surrounding social reproduction.

4. The State of Death

Generally speaking, death is considered to be accompanied by a change of form or external appearance, but with some part of the original essence surviving. Nyongo is a typical example of how the self can be transformed through death. Ethnographic examples used in this article of living

[8]Harries P., *Dead Men Working: A Historical-Anthropological Look at the Modern Zombie Phenomenon in Africa*, Basel: University of Basel, 2005.

relatives who have come across their dead relatives (those perceived to have died through nyongo) suggest that the people are different from their previous selves since they fail to interact with family members in the way they did when they were alive and live lonely lives.

Melvis (a 32 years businesswoman in Durban) explained that her aunt came home one day from her shop panting and stressed because, according to her, her late second cousin's daughter who had died as a result of nyongo had come to her looking for a job. It seemed that she did not know that her aunt knew that she was dead. When she introduced herself, her aunt was so shocked that she gave her a seat and asked her maid to watch her while she went to call her sister to come and check if she was the same person who had died. When they returned to the shop, they found the maid screaming because the ghost had seen them coming and, knowing that her other aunt would recognize her, had disappeared.

Elizabeth, a 36 years old PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, narrated the following story:

> In Pinyin, my village, a young girl died. The death was so mysterious that family members and friends were concerned actually to know what took this young girl's life. A witch doctor was being consulted and he testified that the girl has been sold in to 'Nyongo' by her mother's sister. People could not believe what this man said, but after this girl was buried, three years later, she was found in a different town selling in the market. During these years, her aunt had flourished and had two new cars and three houses. The person who saw this little girl, called her by her name, and at that same spot, she disappeared and has never been seen again.

In contemporary Cameroonian society, nyongo has become so real that it cannot be omitted from any ontological conception of belief. Beliefs and views about nyongo pose serious hermeneutical and epistemological questions of whether or not those dead through nyongo practices are still living and working and, if so, what the implications are for the living as well as the dead. When I asked respondents whether it is possible for someone to be dead yet alive, there were various responses. Valerie, a 30 year old man, said, "practically no, but in terms of Nyongo, yes." According to Melvis, spirits of people who do not die a natural death linger until such time that they were supposed to die. Emmanuel, a 34 year old man, said "I am not really sure but from the stories I have heard, people who die from nyongo are seen elsewhere. So I can say that if witchcraft does exist then it is possible."

5. Appropriations of Nyongo

This form of witchcraft was first observed among the Bakweri of West Cameroon and reported by Ardener in the 1950s. According to him, a person possessing nyongo spirit is able to kill others, especially his/her own relatives, and use their bodies to work for him/her in an invisible town on Mount Kupe. Some people enter this occult group deliberately because they are looking for a quick way of getting what they want out of life. Others go there unknowingly and once in, there is no turning back. They have the option of either joining or being killed by those in the nyongo occult group. It is an easy option for those who love money and also people who are impatient, who want to become rich at all costs because their friends are rich.

When nyongo originally appeared in the 1950s, as Edwin Ardener observed when he first encountered this form of witchcraft among the Bakweri,[9] it was believed that only family members could be sold. This is still largely the case, but of late non-family members have also been sold to nyongo. According to the informants in the study, anyone can be sold to nyongo.Bongmba notes that all the practitioner needs is some link with the intended victim – a gift of money, for example, or even something as simple as dropping money for the innocent victim to pick up.

6. Death through Nyongo and Transformation of Self

Death through nyongo is a type of rebirth because it ushers the individual into a new life with new experiences and a new existence. This is because the person dies when sold and is 'reborn' into a new category. The question is whether people who die through nyongo should be given a new name since they are still living and working in an invisible economy. This is debatable since technically, they are the same people but at the same time different because they cannot fit into their previous roles in life. Stephen Eliis and Gerrie Ter Haar believe that "anything that ceases to exist in one category, and which may more appropriately be assigned to another category as a result of changes it has undergone, may thus be considered to have "died" in the first category, even while some elements of its previous nature is transferred to its new existence."[10] These elements enable some continuity of life to be experienced, rather than life consisting

[9]Ardener E., "The Plantations and the People of Victoria Division" in S. Ardener *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon*, 151-226.

[10]Ellis Stephen and Haar G. T., *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001.

of phases completely unrelated to one another. This would mean that there are some boundaries of identity that are crossed. The question then arises: do these people actually cross boundaries? There may not be any straightforward answer to this question but it would appear that, such a person is a boundary crosser, who is both human and spirit (in the sense that they have a human appearance but also have the ability to appear and disappear, which is not human. These people temporarily cross the boundaries of life and death. Van Gennep[11] and Victor Turner[12] both described this type of dwelling on the margins as "liminality." This is a subjective state of being on the threshold of 'betwixt' and between two different existential positions.

To be in this space is to be caught up in intense "boundary work."[13] Waiting in the grave or mortuary for the nyongo people can be considered a rite of passage, where the bodies of those who will be used in slave labour are in a liminal space, waiting for something to happen.[14] In this case, they are waiting to be deployed to their work destination. Such a space is embedded with secrecy (since this activity is carried out at night and only nyongo people are privileged with such information. In the case of nyongo, waiting is an undesirable state where the victims wait to begin a new life of oppression and loss of self. Such a space places them in liminality. A distinction is made here between transitional and perpetual liminality. Being in transitional liminality is the state of waiting to be abducted from the grave into forced slave labour, but perpetual liminality is a state of being in continuous loyalty to the owner until he/she dies, when the person is freed to die. This type of liminality appears to be mandatory and is at the centre of nyongo economies.

7. The State of the Working Dead

Nyongo seems to freeze the distance between life and death, causing a grey area between the living and the dead. Through nyongo discourse, it is becoming increasingly difficult to discuss life and death in absolutist terms. It would appear that those sold to slave labour are not dead but are 'living people' waiting for real death. The debate about when a person is

[11]Van Gennep A., *Les Rites de Passage: Etudes Systematiques des Rites*, Paris: E. Noury, 1981.

[12]Turner V., *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, New York: De Gruyter, 1969.

[13]Hernes T. and Paulsen N., ed., *Managing Boundaries in Organisations: Multiple Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 1-5.

[14]Crapanzano V., *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa*, London: Granada, 1985.

really considered dead began in 1975 and the conclusion was that a person should be declared dead once they have lost the ability to meaningfully interact with others. Such thinkers[15] argued that the legal boundary of death should be the state of permanent unconsciousness, which marks the death of a person.

Based on the interviews and the general perception that those who have been enslaved by nyongo labour are not really dead, they should be reconceptualised as living people because they are actively involved in wealth creation economies. They are seen in the market places, shops, plantations and so on. They should be considered living on the basis of their contribution to the economy. The main question is whether these people can be reintegrated into society by any means. The interviews revealed that, if the person had been sold and had not died the 'first death' (that is, before being buried and working in the nyongo economy), the person can lead a normal life. The story below by Audin, a 28 year old female, exemplifies the above point.

> It is common practice in Cameroon for people to join njangi, fund rising groups. When these youth go to the markets they join these small njangi groups and they do not know that most of these groups are nyongo societies. They contribute all their money all the time knowing that they will benefit from it and plough back the money into their business to make it grow. When it is their turn to benefit, only then they are told how much money they will be getting and what they need to bring which is usually some family member.
>
> A cousin of mine has been a victim of such groups. He was trading in 'nchang shoes.' He would live from Bamenda and go to all the bush markets surrounding the North West to sell his goods and he was doing well until his friend told him of the njangi they were doing in Pinyin market and how beneficial it is. The friend lured and cajoled him to join the group and he did. Pinyin market is once a week so each time they went to that market, the friend would come to his shed to collect his money for the njangi. That went on every week until one day his friend came and told him that he is the one benefitting from the njangi the following week and as such he needs to be present at the meeting this week so that they'll tell him about what he needs to do. He agreed and went to the meeting that week and they told him that he will be getting five million francs CFC. He

[15]Gervais K. G., *Redefining Death*, New York: Yale University Press, 1986.

was surprised and asked them how it was possible since he thought he would be getting only 500 000 CFA. It is only then that they explained things to him. And they told him he had to sacrifice his mother to get that money. He loved his mother so much and his father had died a long time ago and their mother single raised him and his two younger sisters up. He begged and pleaded with them that he didn't know that is what it entailed but they wouldn't listen. He said he is not interested in the money anymore and that they should keep it and let it go but they wouldn't listen. He ran out of the place and went to his shed. Packed his things and left the market that day. He didn't go to that particular market again just to keep away from them. But still they wouldn't live him alone. They would appear to him and taunt him, threaten him. Things became worse and his friend came to him and told him to pay ten million in exchange for his life and that of his mother. He decided to stop his njangi business. Borrowed money from money lenders and bought two taxis thinking this would make money faster. The taxis worked only for a day and he parked the one he was driving in front of the house and it mysteriously caught fire and was burnt to ashes. Two days later the other one also caught fire. Both the occult people and the money lenders were after him for the money. The occult people told him the only way out for him is to sacrifice his mother and he will get back everything and they'll also make him rich.

To cut the long story short, he finally ran away from Bamenda and went to Yaoundé. There the people were still after him to the extent that they asked him to remove his cloths and go naked. He was going around only in underwear. He entered the taxi and a lady sitting next to him asked him why he is going around naked. He explained to the lady. She felt sorry for him and told him that the same thing had happened to his sister. The lady took him far away to the land of the pigmies and showed him where they delivered his sister from the occult powers. He didn't have money to pay. So the pigmies decided after the women pleaded to heal him and he would come back and pay and finally they delivered him using their own powers. They told him that he should come back and pay and that if he doesn't they will cast a spell on him and that theirs will be worse than that of the njangi.

It is possible for someone to be dead but alive. This is not only with nyongi but even some groups in Cameroon believe that people

die and come back. For example, the Bayangis believe that a person would die and come back to life so they will pack the person's things and keep them somewhere believing that the person will come to collect the things so that they can use it in their next life.

The above scenario, according to the interviews, is the only possible way people can easily reintegrate. However to consider reintegration after burial would depend on two factors: 1. the ability of the person to return to their previous self and 2. the ability of society to accept the person as a living person. This would probably depent on how we reconceptualise nyongo death. If we redefine nyongo dead as a 'type of migrant worker' who has travelled, their reintegration might be possible and easier. It is important to note that nyongo death creates a situation where people may or may not return. Families who have lost people through nyongo death will continue to live in limbo, especially in instances where people have claimed that, that person has been seen working somewhere. One major challenge here is the lack of appropriate research to support the assertion that forced slave nyongo labourers are not dead. Pronouncing these people dead shows society's inability to deal with the possibilities of treating them as living and accepting them in the normal routines of life.

Contemplating reintegration poses serious methodological and epistemological challenges to the current discourse. Firstly, will that person be conscious enough to remember their role and status in the family and society at large? Secondly, if that person has lost all consciousness of their previous self, but the living are able to recognise them; how will the person be reintegrated? Will he/she be given a new identity and birth certificate, be assigned to a neighbourhood, etc.? These are practical questions but difficult to answer since more research is needed. It is an area that is not currently under investigation.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two views on the issue of life after death through nyongo; on the one hand there are those who ontologically believe that there is a site of life and economic activity beyond the world that we know. This group, on the basis of their perceived choice to believe in its existence, (as the interviews show) live and interact with others bearing in mind the existence and dangers of nyongo. For this group, it is becoming increasingly difficult to accept a gift from friends or family members without envisaging a nyongo transaction. Nyongo is so enshrined in their minds that acts of goodwill and reciprocity are misjudged or

misinterpreted. It has also become difficult for them to recognise genuine success without the tendency to relate it to nyongo. This is because every successful, powerful and rich person is often thought of being associated with nyongo economies. There is also the other view (not elaborated in this paper because discussions and suspicions of nyongo was only discovered in Cameroon in the early 1950s) that beliefs are located in people's belief system regarding life after death. In Cameroonian society, death through nyongo is not rooted in the belief system but was introduced through modernity and industrialisation.

Despite the fact that accusations and suspicions of nyongo have increased over the years, there is still no substantial evidence that nyongo can be used as a means to increase one's wealth and socio-political position. Because of its popularity, one would assume that it is easily accessible for anyone who wants to get rich, be politically connected or socially recognised, but paradoxically, although it creates a window of opportunities, it still remains a mystery.

In conceptualising the boundaries between the living and the dead, nyongo poses a dilemma, because several possibilities of identity present themselves. One is to consider nyongo as people on a journey who can be reintegrated and the second is to concentrate on societal perceptions of these people. If we consider them as people on a journey, it therefore implies that we should await their return. One of the problems with their return is that, from the stories and rumours in Cameroonian society, people who have been killed through nyongo and mystically brought back to life lack the consciousness of their previous lives and identities but are able to live, trade and work in their current state. In this state, they have no self-will and live at the mercy and instruction of their owner. This is unsettling for families who find it difficult to find closure at the death of their loved ones who they believe are alive and working in some invisible economy. Focusing on societal perceptions insinuates new areas for research and scholarship. Because of the claims made by some people about seeing dead people working, it creates an opportunity for new forms of mobility and the crossing of boundaries; with its implications on the concept of liminality. Through the claims and accusations of nyongo, the boundary of life and death is being stretched. This creates possibilities of new forms of identity as nyongo technologies seem to undermine any idea on being strictly predicated on what is understood and validated.

This second possibility seems more appealing, since it offers a suitable structure to elaborate on previous research and popular

perceptions. This approach also appealed to me since it focuses on the eliciting peoples' assessment of the nyongo phenomenon through interviews and conversations. After seriously considering the two possibilities that presented themselves for this study, I decided to pursue both for the following reasons: firstly, my belief that perceptions and rumors carry a form of truth, when data is collected through the use of critical ethnography and analyzed; and secondly, to avoid interrogating what would happen if the possibilities for reintegration were opened up. The findings would, however, have been enriched by an interview with someone who has retired from 'nyongo work'. This is not currently possible; hence my reliance on stories told by people and family members who have lost loved ones, friends and community members to nyongo wealth economies.

The article has shown that nyongo is a very flexible and common type of occult practice; occasioning the possible co-existence of suffering (the working dead) and affluence (witchcraft entrepreneurs). These two groups in my opinion seem to be caught in a 'hard place' where they are trapped in the culture of 'either ... or,' and a society that does the labelling. Whether they engage in making sense of these 'labelled' identities or not in what Giddens[16] calls 'discursive consciousness,' or are aware of the embeddedness of their identities in the occult economies conceptualised by Giddens as 'practical consciousness,' is part of what was interrogated in this article. The interviews revealed that there is a possibility (based on the stories and perceptions) of dead people working in an invisible economy to enrich a few people who appear to be diligent enough to know what it takes to become wealthy and powerful. Through nyongo, a new discourse of consciousness is being insinuated with possibilities and implications for life after death, as well as reintegration into society.

Since no individual is happy for his or her social location to be associated with nyongo, it is still surrounded by secrecy, thus allowing pleasure and pain in life and life after death to be intertwined. To what extent the dead people actually work, can retire and be re-intergrated into society is doubtful, on a rational level, especially because there is no evidence at the moment to substantiate claims of nyongo made by people. However, no amount of rationality can be compelling enough to persuade Cameroonians that nyongo does not exist.

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[16]Giddens A., *The Construction of Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.

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IMPERMANENCE AND SOTERIOLOGY

Maja Milčinski♦

1. Introduction

Impermanence (Chinese: *wuchang*; Japanese: *mujō*) is understood here as the basic human condition and as an entrance into the study of soteriological techniques and various practices of achieving immortality and the liberating approaches to the fact that everything that comes into existence eventually vanishes. There are differences of the notion of freedom through transitoriness among the people who have grown up in different cultural traditions. The focus of this paper are Sino-Japanese ways of approaching impermanence, the Confucian, Buddhist, Daoist[1] and their search for an elixir of longevity and their ways of salvation.

Dialogue is vital for transcending the European approaches (sometimes rather narrow) to life, death, freedom and the ethical dilemmas of the illusionary life preservation techniques. The European approach has proven itself prone to classify life and death as independent states, which results in death ordinarily emerging as an unwelcome and shocking event. The Daoist attitude is markedly different from the one displayed in the prime development of European philosophy, which has since been lost. The notion of philosophy (love of wisdom) is distinctly Greek in origin and has been cultivating interesting approaches to impermanence and eternity in its period of cultivation of wisdom. However nowadays it seems that the "philosophy" limits its complex activity primarily to rationally mastered undertakings, which as such are not the suitable tools for approaching the topic of impermanence. One of the main philosophical themes in Asian philosophical traditions is the inseparable unity between philosophical insight and meditation. Philosophy is not only developed on

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♦**Dr. Maja Milčinski** has authored many books including *Soteriology and Freedom*, New Delhi: World Buddhist Press, 2012. *The Sound of Silence: Life and Death in Asian Philosophies and Religions*, Bratislava 2011; *Philosophy and Death*, Zagreb 2008; *Strategies of Liberation*, Ljubljana 2006; *Dictionary of Asian Philosophical Terms*, Ljubljana 2003. She has held teaching and research positions at Ljubljana University (Slovenia), Tokyo University, Toronto University, Marburg University (Germany), International Research Centre for Japanese Studies (Kyoto) and Rikkyo University (Tokyo), Beijing University (Peoples Republic of China), and Banares Hindu University (India).

[1]The *Pinyin* transcription for Chinese characters has been used, therefore, Daoism instead of the older transcription Taoism, *dao* instead of *tao*, etc.

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an intellectual level, but also on a physical level. The truth is not only a method of thinking about the world, but also a way of existing within the world. The discovery of the truth is an activity beyond pure intellect; it is a psycho-physical awareness in which all instances of knowledge are simultaneously practical and theoretical. Such an approach to Truth and Reality is vital for our understanding of life-death continuum.

It is important to acknowledge that human beings grow to realise the necessity of death when they reach the age of nine or ten.[2] It is even more important to distinguish between knowing this fact and the emotional and personal assimilation of this realisation. Our own death and the death of others are very much connected. With any death that we experience, a part of us dies as well. The process of assimilating this fact is something which one has to do alone, by oneself and within oneself. However, this might be a long process for which a single human life may not be sufficient. That is why, in the history of different cultures, we see the emergence of various teaching methods to help people cope with this realisation. These methods arose from the anticipation that human beings had to become familiar with death. An example of this is the medieval text *De Arte Moriendi*, "Against his will he dieth that hath not learned to die. Learn to die and thou shalt con to live, for there shall none con to live that hath not learned to die; and he shall be cleped a wretch that cannot live and dare not die."[3]

In soteriological techniques in different religious and philosophical streams two particular motivations are present when solving problems and regulating relationships within social groups: firstly, specific external material demands, and secondly, subjective motivations from within. The present topic concentrates mainly on the latter. The methods of cultivation of the personality and purification might help us in finding the Way to salvation and enable us to open up to new perspectives free from the whirlpool of everyday life. We co-create our world and our graceful exit from it. It is up to us to find the best way to survive by forgiving and accepting all the limitations, preparing for death and attaining our freedom, to open our hearts to what is coming and to face the here and now without reservations, considerations or choosing, as we usually do when we are caught in a web of mere discursive perception, associations and assimilation of things.

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[2]Maria H. Nagy, "The Child's Theories Concerning Death," *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 73 (1948), 3-27.

[3]*The Book of the Craft of Dying*, trans. Frances M. M. Comper, London, 1917, 127.

2. Epic of Gilgamesh as an Illustration

One of the earliest texts describing the traumatic realization of the inevitability of death is the *Epic of Gilgamesh.*

> Gilgamesh is overwhelmed with deep sorrow as Enkidu, his friend, lies dying. "I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness. His fate lies heavy upon me. How can I be silent, how can I rest?"[4]
>
> Gilgamesh asks "Oh, father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?"
>
> Utnapishtim replies, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever; do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever? Does the flood-time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragon-fly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki, the judges, come together with Mammentun, the mother of destinies, they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose."[5]

Even the great king Gilgamesh is not spared the experience of death.

3. Confucianism

When facing the unavoidable fact of human impermanence mainstream European philosophy grasped and manipulated it in various ways which usually manifested themselves as a sort of a defence mechanism against the incomprehensible phenomenon (ranging from an emotional reaction to a more precisely formed mechanisms of avoidance, evasion and rationalization of the fact of human mortality). In contrast to this, the Chinese line of thought usually presents life and death as parts of a correlate life-death where one element necessarily and expectedly always follows the other. Death was accepted as a natural, inevitable second half that follows birth, meaning that life and death were not understood as linear opposites. Conversely, they are comprehended as intertwined in a

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[4]N. K. Sandars, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, 103.

[5]Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 106-107.

life-death continuum. Consequently, facing impermanence and death in China is profoundly different, gentler and less traumatic. There are some basic principles that created such *genius loci* which has supported an acceptance of death and that presents death as something inevitably common, fulfilling the path of every individual. In contrast with the European avoidance of the topic, Chinese philosophers courageously faced the problem of impermanence and used it for guidance on the path of salvation and enlightenment. They intentionally cultivate the awareness of human mortality in order to help the development of specific soteriological systems.[6] An attitude of such maturity is supported by several thousands of years of spiritual tradition, which has developed philosophical views that allow every individual to face his/her eschatological life events.

Self-cultivation is the central aim of the Confucian philosophy. Self-cultivation and self-transformation should lead to the state of moral consciousness and social integrity. The character of the superior man is shaped by the three main Confucian virtues *ren* (benevolence, humanity), *li* (proper conduct, ritual) and *yi* (sincerity). Confucius understood the process of self-cultivation as related to the process of becoming a superior man (*junzi*). From the soteriological aspect it is the awakening of that special attention which leads to the concentration and focus on that realm of the human state of mind which gradually enriches also one's spirituality. In this context, Confucius' practical philosophy is taken as a turning-point to something new and reverent. It represents also the initial cleansing process, which helps to focus the scope of interest on the new attention which will help eliminate the whirlpool of everyday life in which we are caught and enable us to take a realistic approach to life and death. The main concern of Confucius was good and virtuous life here and now. When asked about life after death and how the spirits of the death and the gods should be served, he answered that the one who is not able even to serve man, can also not serve the spirits. When asked about death, he answered: "You do not understand even life. How can you understand death?"[7]

4. Daoism

The main concern of the Daoists was focused around the question of where the dao is, which besides theoretical reflections included also a certain way of leading one's own life and accepting one's death. It represents the highest degree of ethical commitment characteristic of the True Man.

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[6]Maja Milčinski, *Soteriology and Freedom*, New Delhi: World Buddhist Press, 2012.
[7]Yang Bojun, ed., *Lunyu yizhu*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980, 113.

> The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death. He emerged without delight; he went back without a fuss. He came briskly, he went briskly, and that was all. He didn't forget where he began; he didn't try to find out where he would end. He received something and took pleasure in it; he forgot about it and handed it back again. This is what I call not using the mind to repel the Way, not using man to help out Heaven. This is what I call the True Man.[8]

To reach the point where life and death become "unimportant" to us, so that we look upon them with equanimity, we have to dive into the void. With the Daoists, it is not directly connected with the dialogue about emptiness; instead, the debate is about Dao, nothingness, the search for truth, and the meaning of life and death. At the beginning of all these quests, the illusion of a stable ego that continues on and on appears as an obstacle. Around this illusion, a system of categorizing phenomena builds up, trapping a person in stereotyped evaluations of things and events.

> So it is said, with the sage, his life is the working of Heaven, his death the transformation of things. /.../ His life is a floating, his death a rest. He does not ponder or scheme, does not plot for the future. A man of light, he does not shine; of good faith, he keeps no promises. He sleeps without dreaming, wakes without worry. His spirit is pure and clean, his soul never wearied. In emptiness, nonbeing, and limpidity, he joins with the Virtue of Heaven.[9]

The Daoists teach us about something close to Meister Eckhart's[10] "Abgescheidenheit" (or "Abgeschiedenheit"), translated as "detachment," but might be explained with the sense of separation, objectivity, self-reliance, and equanimity. Some would describe this as a complete standstill, freedom, and rest in oneself; to be with oneself in the soul, in regard to the people and the world to remain withdrawn. However this state is not the same as that practised by a stoic who has withdrawn from life and is keeping himself far from the reach of any emotion, joy or suffering. "The detached person," according to Meister Eckhart is the way

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[8]*Zhuang Zi ji shu*, Beijing: Zhong hua shu ji, 1985. For English tranlation, see B. Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1968, 78.

[9]Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 168-169.

[10]Maître Eckhart, *Du détachement et autres textes*, ed. J. Laborriere, Paris: Payot, 1995.

Jesus Christ was able to live his passion in complete detachment. He was able to live, suffer and rejoice while remaining detached ("ledig") from everyday outer reality. In the same way we do not deny reality as it is offered to us, but accept it. In the Daoist ecology of mind its approach towards death-life is important. It is the consciousness of our own transience that brings us to the field of action. How to function in our optimal way and still practice the deep awareness of our own impermanence which is the only topos of our absolute freedom? It is enlightened self-interest that enables us to achieve the unity with our inner and outer environment and between mind and body. This can be experienced only on the basis of enlightenment, a state in which the consciousness has liberated itself from any form of theoretical rumination and has reached the natural simplicity very close to the Daoist practice of *wu-wei*, the absence of any form of intentional activity, which influenced also their attitude towards death:

> I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called the 'freeing of the bound.' There are those who cannot free themselves, because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever win against Heaven – that's the way it's always been. What would I have to resent?[11]

Concerning the question of longevity and death, Lie Zi's work *On Emptiness* contains an informative discussion between Master Yang Zi and Mengsun Yang who wishes to be instructed.

> Meng Sun Yang asked Yang Chu: "Suppose that a man values his life and takes care of his body; may he hope by such means to live forever?"
> "It is impossible to live forever."
> "May he hope to prolong his life?"
> "It is impossible to prolong life. Valuing life cannot preserve it, taking care of the body cannot do it good. Besides, what is the point of prolonging life? Our passions, our likes and dislikes, are the same now as they were of old. The safety and danger of our four limbs, the joy and bitterness of worldly affairs, changes of fortune, good government and discord are the same now as they were of old. We have heard it already, seen it already, experienced it already. Even a hundred years is enough to satiate us; could we endure the bitterness of still longer life?"

[11] *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 84-85.

> Meng Sun Yang continued:
> "If it is so, and swift destruction is better than prolonged life, you can get what you want by treading on blades and spear points, rushing into fire and boiling water."
> Yang Zi answered:
> "No. While you are alive, resign yourself and let life run its course; satisfy your desires and wait for death. When it is time to die, resign yourself and let death run its course; go right to your destruction, which is extinction. Be resigned to everything, let everything run its course; why need you delay it or speed it on its way?"[12]

One can see from this conversation how the Master opposes his student's potential decision to opt for suicide in the shortest way possible because life offers no prospects. But to perceive life and death as "insignificant," one must dive into the emptiness or at least bathe in it. This idea is encountered in other authors as well, although they may not discuss emptiness per se: among Daoists and also in Buddhism when they discuss the path, nothingness, search for the truth and purpose of life and death. At the beginning of these searches, the obstacle along the path is an idea or illusion of some kind of persistent self, around which grows a system for the categorisation of phenomena which keeps the person caught in a stereotype of everyday evaluation of things and events. Masters who know this dynamic warn us that one should not cling to the idea of nothingness or emptiness again in our attempts to overcome this problem.

Lie Zi introduces us to the process of forming and cultivating personality that requires effort and focus, which in itself constitutes relinquishing that which is less important. This is a long-term mental and physical undertaking which necessitates persistence to accomplish something which is certainly not an intellectual acquisition or an object, but an experience in which a person transcends him/herself as well as time and space, a feeling of liberation or salvation.

5. Ego Emptiness versus the Void in Sino-Japanese Buddhism

Asian cultures have traditionally been more accepting of the void and have encouraged self-cultivation techniques that open the doors to the void without the fear of it. The void is a necessary prerequisite for successful training and the success of the soteriological project. The void

[12] *Lie Zi ji shi*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985, 229. For English tranlation, see *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, trans. A. C. Graham, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 147-148.

accompanying death also presents a challenge to the European philosophical project, since it questions the tradition of discursive thinking and it develops various techniques of embodiment through which the body "talks" to itself as well as to the consciousness. It is essential to become acquainted with such methods and to comprehend the communication between body and mind, especially when engaging in any serious salvific project. Not only do we measure our world through language, language also provides the basic orientation through which we structure our perception and through which we enter the world and the world enters us. For this reason, long-standing traditions which have developed self-cultivation techniques for which the practice of acute non-(trans)sensory cognition is typical are interesting. The quest to attain the non-real requires that we overcome the limits of body and the sensory realm. Such methods demonstrate how liberation from the suffocating ego can be achieved.

These two concepts could be defined as:

> emptiness in connection with ego-emptiness – deprived of any qualities, unimportant, without significance, meaningless, hollow;
>
> void – designating a completely unfilled space without borders or with only vague, undefined borders. Both concepts are connected to theoretical reflection on impermanence and death.

When approaching the question of human impermanence, the Sino-Japanese model begins with the mystical experience of the cosmic void. The second phase is the endeavour to formulate the experience into words and concepts which are used to describe this state to people who have not had the chance to experience it directly themselves. Such experiments, however, remain at the margin of its essence, on the level of metaphor. This is well expressed in the classical work – *Dao de jing*: "As for the Way, the Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way."[13] The European model begins by developing the idea of the ego – the individual consciousness, which has its roots at the very beginning of this developing tradition, and which brought about the famous Cartesian "Cogito, ergo sum." It created its tools – time and space, produced its own method – logically discursive discipline, and plugged into the endless cosmic void with the aim of defining it "scientifically" with words *in toto* and in all its detail. As this edifice grows ever larger, the solidity of the arguments which encompass the ego becomes increasingly weak.

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[13]Lao-Tzu, *Te-Tao Ching*, trans. Robert G. Henricks, New York: Ballantine Books, 1989, 53.

The ego is afraid of being swallowed by the void, but at the same time it wants to master it, therefore it builds around its axis a structure made up of scientific proofs and experiments with which it attempts to master the reality of life, and thus to penetrate the void. This process would extend infinitely and attempt to encompass the entire void. In the immense, consciously and logically edified structure, the ego considers itself to be a master throughout, and aspires to the ultimate position of a God. In the ideal case, the entire cosmic and infinite void would be mastered and the ego would become a God. When the entire void is mastered there is no void. There is no Ultimate, there is no God, nor anything which is not God. What remains is the cosmic void, and so this process, which starts with ego-consciousness, results in ego-emptiness. The ego travels all this way to be confronted at the end with its own antithesis – the void. Both paths finally lead back to the void – the European way slowly, since it is afraid of the void and constantly defends itself with logic and God, and the Sino-Japanese way directly, since the void is familiar and fundamental to it.

It would be wrong to try to view these two models as distinct spiritual edifices that have grown and developed separately in Europe and Asia respectively, since their parallel development can be traced in spiritual traditions throughout history. Depending on the culture, one of them is the dominant whilst the other is its counter pole, its subtle shadow. In the Sino-Japanese tradition of void and silence, the searching for and the finding of ways to come closer to the ineffable, through words and images, is the essence of its meditative-mystical search. The European tradition has had its share of mystics too, although it has often tried to repress them under the charge of heresy, and instead has encouraged its artists to portray their anticipations of the Absolute and impermanence.

The pattern of thinking offered by the European philosophy leads us to a dead-end where the ego and the so-called "reality" confront each other, precipitating a desperate struggle or a paralysing terror. This dispute can be represented by the image of Uroboros: a snake biting its own tail, representing *sa□sāra*, the infinite vicious circle of activities which encourage one another, the stampede for wealth and longevity which is soon revealed to be an illusion. In the Sino-Japanese pattern, the snake Uroboros is replaced by an open circle, which represents the acceptance of the idea that the reality of life is an illusion. Here, we cannot expect any forced logic to fit any neat philosophical conclusions, but rather a path of parables and metaphors as it has been practised by Chinese Daoists philosophers.

6. Conclusion

The notion of impermanence is a central to many Asian religious and philosophical traditions. Buddhism, for instance, considers life-death to be its most obvious aspect and retains it as a problem of soteriology and freedom. The notion of transience in Buddhism is part of the inevitable experience of death, which is rooted in the four ultimate limitations (based on the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism) among which the first is that birth is a necessary condition for the occurrence of death. In Buddhism, one cannot escape the cycle of painful reincarnations if one has not trained in detachment, lucidity and asceticism; only these abilities can open the door to salvation. The wise ones bow to the inevitable and the incurable. *Nirvā□a*, the complete enlightenment, is possible only when one awakens to the truth of *sa□sāra*. Even the Buddha would have starved himself to death and wasted away in extreme asceticism had he not realised in time that his goal was not to die but to be awakened and to find the middle way. Therefore, in Buddhism, suicide is not the solution; in the cycle of reincarnations, suffering begins when a person commits suicide. Suicide itself is the proof of excessive attachment and unrealistic expectations without which there would be none of the illusions and disappointments that create suicidal tendencies in the first place.

Impermanence is discussed in relation to the phenomenon of death and the illusions about immortality. These questions are important for understanding the conflict between accepting the inescapable fact of one's own impermanence at the rational as well as the emotional and spiritual spheres; it is equally important for us to recognize our own strategies of avoidance, evasion, suppression or indifference. The fact of impermanence is used as an entrance into the study of self-cultivation and soteriological techniques as well as the liberating approaches to the fact that everything that comes into existence eventually vanishes. The self-empowering methods might help us identify with the true part of our being, our inner self and soul. They are supposed to enrich the horizon of understanding the essence of the human condition. The contemporary world has developed the scientific, technological and organisational skills at the level of material demands. However, this tempo has not been accompanied by the progress on the subjective level. Therefore, many of the material achievements reflect the damage done later in terms of its consequences and effects. It is hoped that this development will be supplemented and an old gap in education and research will be filled by bringing about the methodological orientation towards the cultivation of personality, for

which the acceptance of impermanence and the orientation towards a soteriological goal are necessary.

If death is understood as a severance of life, a frightening experience devoid of meaning and explanation, this can have profound and far reaching practical implications in all areas of life. In accordance with this philosophy is given a more vital role in contemporary debates on topics concerning impermanence (the experience of death, the accompanying of the dying, the problem of a high suicide rate, fear of death; and ethical dilemmas such as the right to euthanasia, abortion, etc.). The questions are raised to enrich the horizon of understanding the essence of the human condition. The importance of self-cultivation and methodical meditation in human search for its essence and their incorporation into society is important.

Daoist offers methods of cultivation through which our ego becomes less active, less able to discriminate and analyse, and therefore the ego loses its grip on our consciousness. This enables the mind to become more receptive to the wisdom otherwise hidden to us. In this process of transformation, our whole body and being becomes an eternal spring, the source of circulating internal energy. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to liberate our spirit from the earthly realm so that we never mistake the impermanent for the real. In this regard impermanence is a very important didactic tool for spiritual evolvement. To break our attachment to the world and the material clutches of our earthly existence, sword as a spiritual symbol is used to cut through the illusions of ephemeral things and to seek the greatest treasures of all. Where there is ego, the true heart cannot emerge. It is only in stillness and the absence of craving that original nature can be cultivated. As long as the ego exists, the heart of the Dao cannot emerge. This process is based on the nonattachment to forms. If we cannot relinquish attachment to forms, then we will never tame our minds. The self-cultivation and self-empowering techniques remind us that life is short and that the time of death is uncertain. Therefore, we should apply ourselves immediately to attaining the psychic power, which should be guided by grace and compassion, and ignore the worldly pursuits that have but one unavoidable and inevitable end: sorrow. Such way of liberation cultivates the process of thinking, which goes beyond conceptual thinking. It means the move from the ontological to the soteriological level in the search for the essence; from the level of recognition to the level of liberation. It is only when one gains some measure of detachment from birth and death that one reaches a state of being alive and being aware of being alive.

Gilgamesh has been presented here as an example of didactic texts guiding its readers into the notion of impermanence, the acceptance of which is necessary for methodological orientation towards the cultivation of personality and the orientation towards a soteriological goal. The two Chinese philosophical texts, which were discussed, are instructive for the realization that the acknowledgement of one's self leads to the forgetting of it, which enables the recognition of the absolute self. Daoism encouraged transcendence of the mundane world for achieving the completeness of human life and the Absolute Good and harmony with nature.

It is selfhood that is the obstacle on the path of liberation, as Chinese Daoist philosophers teach us and try to help us grow up and accept the responsibility without resorting to any of the numerous techniques of withdrawal, and to perceive within ourselves the mechanisms that drive us to various actions. Daoists make us face the unavoidability of death, and the necessity of accepting one's own transience as well as the transience of the universe itself. Such an attitude can be attained only through the methodical cultivation of transcendental thinking, by sensory deprivation and spiritual consciousness as means of achieving the highest spiritual goals, a process in which physical consciousness undergoes gradual degradation. Achieving a higher (or different) state of consciousness is described by some authors as a mystic consciousness. The long path of ridding one's spirit of all conscious and disturbing unconscious content, such as desires, anger or self-deception, can only be successful when the spirit attains a high degree of attention, focus and peace, so that knowledge can be anchored, stabilized and assimilated. In this way, we may come to a new understanding of ourselves and the world, reaching a liberating insight that what actually liberates us (and what tends to enslave us) is the correct way of understanding ourselves and the world. This stage is described as an uninterrupted joy that is reached when one is no longer separated from one's core.

Creative living, which can be based on such standards, rejects the deadening dimension of spiritual and political stagnation and can bring us closer to the equilibrium of cosmic forces, human purpose and the Absolute.

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LIFE AFTER DEATH
In the Intertestamental Palestine Context

Xavier Terrence♦

1. Introduction

The intertestamental history of the people of Israel, the Jews, marked a new kind of identity, an identity amidst the silence of God. The humiliating experience of slavery and their acquaintance with the foreign culture, religion and philosophy had its own influence on them. This was further aggravated by the Hellenistic and Roman culture and philosophy through invasions. In addition, there was no new revelation from God. This experience made a great impact in their understanding of life and death: while looking for a survival in terms of nation as a whole, they tried also to see a survival beyond death in the form of resurrection. This new climate of religious and philosophical thinking and expression favoured Jesus and the early Church towards quite a new understanding of life, death and afterlife. Most of these writings are of apocalyptic nature. A word on apocalyptic, the *Child of Prophecy*,[1] would surely help us to understand its importance.

The milieu of Jewish apocalyptic literature covers roughly from about 200 BCE to about 100 CE. The postexilic context of Israel encouraged the cryptic and apocalyptic character of the oracles and message due to the political and religious turbulence. The importance of apocalyptic literature lies in its function as a bridge which links, rather continues, the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible and the prophetic mission of Jesus by opening a new way to think and interpret.[2] E. Käsemann's strong conviction that "Apocalyptic is the mother of Christian

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♦**Dr T. Xavier Terrence,** a Catholic priest from the Diocese of Palayamkottai, India, is a professor of Theology at St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, India. He holds a Licentiate in Biblical Theology and a Doctorate in Patrology.

[1]J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," *CBQ* 36 (1974), 21-43, 22.

[2]D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic: Ancient and Modern*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, 38-29; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964, 15, 24-26, 74, 127-133, 181-183; R. H. Charles, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, London: Oxford University Press, 1923, 1-2, 6.

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theology"[3] finds its meaning in this context. Here we are more concerned with the linguistic and cultural milieu than a territorial one. We take the works originally written either in Hebrew or in Aramaic.[4] From this background we study the concept of *Life after Death* among the People of God in the intertestamental Palestinian context.

2. The Book of Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees (ca. 200-105 B.C.E.) is mostly a midrashical[5] explanation of the stories in Genesis and in Exodus, till the 14th chapter.[6] While speaking of the importance of the Law and its observance with all its severity, it explains about the afterlife in 23:30-31: [30]Then the Lord will heal his servants. They will rise and see great peace.... [31]Their bones will rest in the earth and their spirits will be very happy.[7]

The first part of v.30 resembles very much Hosea 6:2 that Yahweh would heal the people, the nation as a military and political unit, and raise them to live in His presence. The second part is close to Daniel 12:2, which speaks about the two kinds of retribution. It would mean the defeat of the enemy by Israel and a prolonged happy life of the people of Yahweh. On the contrary, v.31 points to a situation after death. In v.31 we see a denial of the bodily resurrection and an affirmation of the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul. It could be a good pointer to the development of the post-exilic concept of the afterlife.[8]

In fact, in v.31 the focal point rests in the idea of the final role of God in the struggle of the Jews and of the *hesed* (kindness) of Yahweh. The author wants the reader to understand that the death of the just, who remained faithful even unto death, did not go in vain and that God will

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[3]E. Käsemann, "The Beginning of Christian Theology," 82-107, in E. Käsemann, ed., *The New Testament Questions of Today*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969, 102.

[4]The portions in the Canonical Books of the Hebrew Bible and the Rabbinic Literature are not taken into consideration for our study.

[5]*Midrash* in Hebrew means 'Interpretation' or 'Exposition'.

[6]A-M. Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes Grecs d'Ancien Testament*, SVTP-I, Leiden: E. G. Brill, 1970, 150.

[7]J. C. Vanderkam, trans., *The Book of Jubilees*, Lovanii: Aedibus E. Peeters, 1989, 149.

[8]P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1934, 28; G. L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees*, SPB-20, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971, 40; H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, Part I, Coniectanea Biblica – New Testament Series – 7:1, Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1974, 38. Compare it with Wisdom 2:22-24.

vindicate their death.[9] He proposes a post-mortem and pre-resurrection transition of the dead: passing from the dark (passive, shadowy idea of *Sheol* – Underworld) into a more lively existence in the happiness of the souls. But these concepts are not woven well to give a proper teaching on the afterlife. Considering the context of vv.30-31 and the religious unrest of the time of the author, these verses seem to warn the Jews against the adaptation of foreign religious practices and the subsequent divine punishment.

2. Ethiopic Enoch (1 Enoch)

Enoch, being a close friend of God (Genesis 5:24; Sirach 44:16; 49:14; Hebrew 11:5), attracted the attention of the Jews because he was taken to heaven. They considered him to be the right person to reveal the mysteries. The most important work on him is Ethiopic Enoch or 1Enoch. The whole book is divided into five parts or sections and the date of each section varies from *ca.* 300 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.[10]

In the first section, in chapter 22 the author describes the abode of the souls[11] being explained by the holy angel Raphael:

> [3]These beautiful places (are intended for this) that the spirits, the souls of the dead, might be gathered into them; for them they were created, (that) here they might gather all the souls of the sons of men.

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[9]G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTS-26, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press/Oxford University Press, 1972, 32; G. L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees*, 40; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, 29.

[10]Genesis 5:24; Sirach 44:16; 49:14; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, 513; P. Vielhauer, "Jesus und der Menschensohn," *ZThK* 60 (1963), 133-177, 169; J. C. Hindley, "Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch: An Historical Approach," *NTS* 14 (1967/68), 551-565, 562-564.

[11]There are four types of habitats prepared for the souls of the dead. The primary one is reserved for the Just like Abel and the others for the sinners. The habitat of the Just is brilliant with a fountain of refreshing water. On the contrary, in the other habitats there are various types of tortures. But these habitats are provisory where the souls wait for a new kind of existence yet to come. Cf. P. Grelot, *De la Mort a la Vie Éternelle*, Lectio Divina-67, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971, 210; P. Grelot further compares these habitats with that of the Ancient Greek Mytholigies. Cf. P. Grelot, "L'eschatologie des Esséniens et le livre d'Hénoch," *RQ* 1 (1958), 113-131, 124-127.

> [4]And these places they made where they will keep them until the day of their judgment…
>
> [10]Likewise (a place) has been created for sinners when they die and are buried in the earth and judgment has not come upon them during their life… [13]Thus (a place) has been created for the souls of men who are not righteous, but sinners, accomplished in wrongdoing, and with the wrongdoers will be their lot. But their souls will not be killed on the day of judgment, nor will they rise from here.

There are some important points to be noted: There is an intermediate existence after death; there will be an end to this existence; and they will be judged. Hence the souls of the righteous are supposed to vacate this place. On the contrary, the souls of the wicked are kept apart and there will be no return from their place. The implied resurrection in this passage points to a kind of transfer of the souls at judgment.[12]

The Second section, on the contrary, gives an example in a concrete way for the resurrection of the body. In 51:1 we read,

> And in those days the earth will return that which has been entrusted to it, and *Sheol* will return that which has been entrusted to it, that which it has received and destruction will return what it owes.

It is very clear to understand that the earth will hand over the dead bodies and the *Sheol* their souls. The author does not limit this responsibility only to these two. He includes those who have died elsewhere in some other mode (61:5),

> And these measurements will reveal all the secrets of the depths of the earth, and those who were destroyed by the desert, and those who were devoured by the fish of the sea and by animals, that they may return and rely on the day of the Chosen One; for no one will be destroyed before the Lord of Spirits, and no one can be destroyed.

If it is only the soul which is to be resurrected or which is to be judged, then it is absurd to think of the body to be revived. So the idea that emerges here is evidently that of the resurrection of the body. It is extended not only to those who died during the religious persecutions but

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[12]G. W. E. Nickelsburg is of the opinion that there will be a transfer of the souls at judgment and says, "The author appears to view this transferral as a kind of 'resurrection,' for he says that the spirits of the sinners in the other compartment 'will not be raised from there.'" Cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 136-137; K. Schubert, "Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von den nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit, *BZ* 6 (1962) 177-214, 192.

also to those who died for various reasons, in various modes and in different places. We also find some passages in this section which mention a kind of afterlife without bodily resurrection (37:4; 40:9; 58:3; 108:11).[13]

In the fifth section towards the end he speaks of the resurrection of the sinners (108: 11-15):

> [11]...and I will transform those who were born in darkness, who in the flesh were not recompensed with honour, as was fitting to their faith. [14]And they will see those who were born in darkness thrown into darkness, while the righteous shine. [15]And the sinners will cry out as they see them shining, but they themselves will go where days and times have been written down for them.

From all these passages a few points are clear: There will be a bodily restoration. For this reason the souls have to wait patiently in their temporary abode. But how the restoration would be effected is not clear in the arguments of the author. In some parts there is confusion between a resurrection of the body and a resurrection of the soul. The exhortation in 104:4 and a few other elements point to a kind of national restoration of the Jews with a New Jerusalem and a New Temple.[14] To convince the righteous who are alive and those who suffer, the author is claiming the authenticity of the information through a first-hand conversation with the holy angel Raphael and a first-hand visit through cosmic journey.

3. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

They are a collection of discourses under the name of the twelve Patriarchs to their descendants to pass on the spiritual and material legacy. This collection is considered to be a pre-Christian Jewish writing redacted and edited by the Christians. Though the main thrust of these testaments is 'waiting for two Messiahs,'[15] we find some resurrection passages. The main characteristics of the resurrection passages can be summarised as follows:

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[13]R. H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, London: SPCK, 1952, 69; P. Grelot, "L'eschatologie des Esséniens et le livre d'Hénoch," 121f.

[14]K. Schubert, "Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von den nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit," 192; L. Hartman, *Prophecy interpreted: The Formation of some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par*, Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series-1, Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1966, 112-126.

[15]*A Priestly Messiah* from the tribe of Levi (T. Reuben 6:7-12; T. Judah 21:2ff) and a *Kingly Messiah* from the tribe of Judah (T. Judah 24:5-6).

3.1. Resurrection of the Ancient Heroes of the Hebrew Bible

Then you will see Enoch, Noah and Shem and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob rising on the right hand in gladness (T. Benjamin 10:6).

Then Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will exult, and I, too, shall be glad, and all the saints will put on joy (T. Levi 18: 14).

And after these things Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will arise unto life... (T. Judah 25:1).

3.2. Resurrection of the Twelve Patriarchs

Then I shall arise in joy and I shall bless the Most High because of his marvellous works, for God, taking a body and eating with men, saved men (T. Simeon 6:7).

And after these things Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will arise unto life, and I and my brothers will be chiefs of our tribes in Israel: Levi first, I second, Joseph third, Benjamin fourth, Simeon fifth, Issachar sixth and, so all in order (T. Judah 25:1).

And now, my children, do not grieve that I die nor be cast down that I pass away. For I shall rise again in the midst of you as a ruler in the midst of his sons, and I shall rejoice in the midst of my tribe as many as have kept the law of the Lord and the commandments of Zebulun their father (T. Zebulun 10:1-2).

Then we also will rise each one over our tribe, worshipping the king of heaven who appeared on earth in the form of a man of humility; and as many as believed in him on earth, will rejoice with him (T. Benjamin 10:7).

3.3. Resurrection of the Righteous and the Gentiles Who Believed in God

And he will open the gates of paradise and will stop the threatening sword against Adam. And he will give to the saints to eat from the tree of life and the spirit of holiness will be upon them (T. Levi 18:10-11).

And those who have died in grief will arise in joy and those who were in poverty for the Lord's sake will be made rich and those who were in want will be fed and those who were in weakness will be strong and those who died for the Lord's sake will awake to life (T. Judah 25:4).

And he will take the captivity from Beliar, the souls of the saints, and he will turn disobedient hearts to the Lord and he will give eternal peace to those who call upon him. And the saints will rest in Eden and the righteous will rejoice in the new Jerusalem, which will be to the glory of the Lord forever... And he who believes in him will be king in truth in the heavens (T. Dan 5:11-13).

Then also all men will rise, some unto glory and some unto shame. And the Lord will judge Israel first for the unrighteousness done to him, because they did not believe that God appeared in the flesh as a deliverer. And then he will judge all the Gentiles as many as did not believe him when he appeared on earth (T. Benjamin 10:8-9).

3.4. Resurrection: A Reversal in the Fortune of Humankind

And those who have died in grief will arise in joy and those who were in poverty for the Lord's sake will be made rich and those who were in want will be fed and those who were in weakness will be strong and those who died for the Lord's sake will awake to life (T. Judah 25:4).

For if the soul departs troubled, it is tormented by the evil spirit, whom it also served in its desires and evil works. But if (it departs) quietly in joy, he (the man) has recognized the angel of peace, who will comfort him with life (T. Asher 6:5-6).

A general resurrection is being spoken of here in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. But there are some difficulties. No details of the resurrection and the intermediate state of the soul are explained. In Asher 6:5-6, the survival of the righteous and the sinners is mentioned. It stresses the immortality of the soul.[16] A New Jerusalem is proposed as the location for the resurrected people but the topography is not explained (Daniel 5:12). With all these characteristics, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs give a somewhat vivid expression on the resurrection. It could mean the restoration of the twelve tribes and the reconstitution of Israel as well as the resurrection of those who died for the sake of the religion.[17]

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[16]It points to the 'Theology of Two Ways' which was familiar in the Qumran Community and in Wisdom 1-5. It could be also due to Greek influence. Cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 156-159, 161-164.

[17]E. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, Part 2, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1980, 1-5, 23; J. T. Milik, "Le Testament de Lévi en Araméen," *RB* 62 (1955), 398-406, 405-406; M. De Jonge, "The main Issues in the Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," 509, 512-516; J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "Remarks from the Aramaic Testament of Levi from the Geniza," *RB* 86 (1979), 214-230, 225, 227-227; M. De Jonge, "The Pre-Mosaic Servants of God in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and in the Writings of Justin and Irenaeus," *VC* 39 (1985), 157-170, 160-161; M. De Jonge, "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Christian and Jewish," 233-243, in M. De Jonge, ed., *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, SNT-63, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991, 238.

4. Psalms of Solomon

It is a collection of hymns associated with the name of Solomon (Second half of the first century B.C.E.) in order to have a patronage. Like the canonical Psalms, one thinks of a few authors and more than one context which could represent the views of the Pharisaic line of thought or that of a common folk. The author in 3:10-12 speaks of resurrection in order to encourage the righteous:

> [10]He adds sin upon sin in his life; he falls – his fall is serious – and he will not get up. [11]The destruction of the sinner is forever, and he will not be remembered when (God) looks after the righteous. [12]This is the share of sinners forever, but those who fear the Lord shall be in the Lord's light, and it shall never end.

Here we find two perfectly contrasting situations of the righteous and of the sinners. The righteous, due to the intervention of God, will be raised to a new life. This presumed resurrection is explained in the context of divine glory as a promise to the righteous. But in vv.5-8 the author speaks about the fall of the righteous due to their sins. They do penance and look for divine help. On the contrary, in vv.9-11we read that the sinners go on piling their sins. In this context the *rising* means to rise from among the sins in order to begin a new life. These verses speak of the *light of the Lord* which does not mean heaven or heavenly setting, rather points to the happy or fortunate life and the blessedness of the righteous.[18] It is very difficult to extract the exact notion of resurrection from this Psalm. But it is clear that the use of the concept of resurrection was gaining its ground in the context of the author. The author does not make use of the national concept but of the virtue of righteousness.[19]

5. Qumran Writings

The sectarian community of Qumran, known for their theology and piety, had its origin in the religious and national reformation movement in the

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[18]G. Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung*, An. Bib.-56, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972, 60.

[19]J. O'Dell, "The Religious Background of the Psalms of Solomon," *RQ* 3 (1961) 241-257, 241-249; J. L. Trafton, "The Psalms of Solomon: New Light from the Syriac Version?" *JBL* 105 (1986) 227-237, 229; J. Begrich, "Der Text der Psalmen Salomos," *ZNW* 38 (1939) 131-164, 131, 163-164; A-M. Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes Grecs d'Ancien Testament*, 63-64; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 131-132, 134; J. Schüpphaus, *Die Psalmen Salomos*, LGHJ-7, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977, 30-31.

first half of the second century BCE.[20] The birth of this community and its life in the midst of the religious persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes and then the Romans were nourished by the prophesy of Habakkuk 2:4. In interpreting this verse, the commentator writes in 4QpHab 8:1-3, "This concerns all those who observe the Law in the house of Judah, whom God will deliver from the House of Judgment because of their suffering and because of their faith in the Teacher of righteousness."[21] This gave rise for the discussion on their belief in the resurrection of the body which made the scholars argue for and against.[22] Let us take into consideration some of the texts that might highlight some more insights into the concept of death and thereafter.

5.1. Resurrection Fragment (4Q521)

It is known as 'A Messianic Apocalypse' but often referred to as 'Resurrection Fragment.' The poetical content of this fragment is dated to the first century B.C.E. It speaks of a Messiah who would stand on the side of the poor and oppressed to change their present precarious conditions.[23] Two quotations possibly give an explicit reference to the resurrection:

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[20]*Damascus Document* 1:5-8. Cf. G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 127; R. E. Brown, et al, "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," *NJBC*, 1073-1074.

[21]The translations of the Qumran manuscripts are taken from G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* and É. Puech, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)," *RQ* 15 (1991-1992), 475-519, 486.

[22]Taking into consideration the Community Rule IV: 6-8, 11-13 and the War Scroll XII:1-7, J. Carmignac explains the 'theology of resurrection' in Qumran with other references favouring a kind of resurrection. He is very cautious and finally concludes that one cannot actually deduce an affirmation on resurrection. R. Meyer refers to the members as Zadokites who deny resurrection. F. F. Bruce is of the opinion that there is a lot on the eternal life for the righteous but no clear light on the question of resurrection. K. Schubert does not see any direct pointer to resurrection. M. Mansoor, in f.n. 64, takes the expression *those who lie in the dust* and compares it with Isaiah 26:19; Job 7:21; 20:11; 21:26 and argues that it is a clear allusion to resurrection. For him the belief in resurrection was highly developed in the sect. Cf. J. Carmignac, "*Le retour du Docteur de Justice à la fin des jours*?" *RQ* 2 (1958), 235-248, 235-239 esp. 239; R. Meyer, "Σαδδουκαῖος ," 35-54, in G. Friedrich, ed., *TDNT*, Vol.7, Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, 40-41; F. F. Bruce, "Paul on Immortality," *ScJTh* 24 (1971), 457-472, 459; K. Schubert, "*Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit*," 202-203; M. Mansoor, "Studies in the *HODAYOT* – IV," *JBL* 76 (1957), 139-148, 146.

[23]G. Vermes, "Qumran Forum Miscellanea I," *JJS* 43 (1992), 299-305, 303; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 391.

2:12 For He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor.

7:6 The Giver of life will resurrect the dead of His people.

It is interesting to note the overtones of Hosea 6:1-2 in the first passage. Often the expressions of *healing* and *reviving* refer to the restoration of the nation. But here we have a new element in addition, *bringing good news to the poor*, which brings this fragment closer to the context of suffering people. The context of this line suggests that the author encourages the *Seekers of the Lord* to strengthen themselves in order to find Him. On the contrary 7:6 uses clear terminologies regarding the dead and their raising. The author's belief in the general resurrection of the righteous is expressed in terms of a re-creation by the Creator God.[24]

5.2. *Hôdayôt* (Thanksgiving Hymn)

These hymns are individual prayers and they are similar to the biblical Psalms. The *two-way theology* and *salvation* form fundamental themes.[25]

[29b]...and all the sons of His truth shall awake to (overthrow) wickedness; [34]Hoist a banner, O you who lie in the dust! O bodies gnawed by worms, raise up an ensign for (the destruction of wickedness)! (The sinful shall) be destroyed in the battles against the ungodly (1QH VI, 29b, 34).

...and destroying my flesh for seasons on end (1QH VIII, 31).

...that bodies gnawed by worms may be raised from the dust to the counsel (of Thy truth)... (1QH XI, 12).

These passages centre on a single theme: the final battle between the righteous and the wicked. The suffering was slow, steady and sharp like the suffering of the flesh gnawed by worms. This figurative description signifies nothingness and destitution of the Just and may not refer to those

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[24]This expression can be traced back to Isaiah 61:1 and Psalm 146:6-8, which is referred to more clearly in Luke 4:18. The announcement of Isaiah 61:1 is repeated to the contemporaries of the author of this fragment to fit into their actual situation or as an announcement of future salvation one finds in Palestinian Judaism. Its context, Line 2-3 makes it clear: "Seekers of the Lord, strengthen yourselves in His service! All you hopeful in (your) heart, will you not find the Lord in this?" Cf. G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 391; É. Puech, "*Une apocalypse messianique* (4Q521)," 493, 505.

[25]G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 146; H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 63; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 243-244.

who have died.[26] Hence it could be a revelation regarding the future. These passages do not describe that one has suffered and died and that now the dead body is gnawed by worms and it should be raised. However these lines can be taken to refer to and explain a bodily resurrection. But for the members of the Qumran community it was a realized resurrection by one's adherence to the discipline of the community.[27]

5.3. The Wicked and the Holy (4Q181)

This fragment explains the better position of the righteous and the adverse situation of the wicked after their death. In lines 3-4 the author writes:

> In accordance with the mercies of God, according to His goodness and wonderful glory, He caused some of the sons of the world to draw near (Him)... to be counted with Him and in the community of the 'gods'...

Here the action of God is clearly expressed: to cause somebody to draw near. This action explains well the act of resurrection.[28]

The Qumran passages we have referred to above make us think of a growing conviction on the bodily resurrection among the members of the

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[26]F. Nötscher and J. Carmignac could not find any clear and precise argument for the resurrection of the dead in these passages. At the same time they are not satisfied with the explanation of *Licht* for *dust* and *worm* in 1QH VI 34. The *dust* means for them, as in Psalm 113:7, the *poor* and the *needy*. They explain the *worm of death*, in reference to Isaiah 41:14, which refers to the people of Israel who were reduced to a low status by their enemies. J. v.d. Ploeg considers that the Qumran sect is eternal and one may trace out some kind of individual eternity. He is also of the opinion that *dust* does not bring those lying on it to the realm of death and resurrection. F. Nötscher, "*Hodajot* (*Psalmenrolle*)," *BZ* 2 (1958), 128-133, 132-133; J. Carmignac, "*Le retour du Docteur de Justice à la fin des jours*?" 237; J. van der Ploeg, "The Belief in Immortality in the Writings of Qumran," *BO* 18 (1961), 118-124, 122-123. Cf. Psalm 141:7-8; 143:3-4, 7; Jonah 2:2, 6; Lamentations 3:53, 55.

[27]G. Greshake and J. Kremer, *Resurrectio Mortuorum*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986, 61; K. Schubert, "*Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit*," 203; M. Mansoor, "Studies in the *HODAYOT* – IV," 146, f.n.64; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 156. It could refer even to the entrance into the Christian community through baptism. Cf. Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:12-13; Ephesians 2:5-6; 5:14.

[28]J. T. Milik suggests *eternal life* in his translation and J. Strugnell suggests an angelic life to the members. J. T. Milik, "*Milkî-cedeq et Milkî-Reša' dans les Anciens Écrits Juifs et Chrétiens* (I)," *JJS* 23 (1972) 95-144, 114; J. Strugnell, "*Notes en marge du volume V des 'Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan*,'" *RQ* 7 (1970), 163-276, 254.

community. The *Sitz im Leben* might have been the context of a religious persecution and a threat to the *chosen-ness* of the people of Yahweh. The disappointing suffering of the righteous and the encouraging happy life of the wicked are hoped strongly to be reversed in the life beyond the grave. The *flesh* and the *body* which suffered before entering into the grave would enjoy beyond the grave and the *flesh* and the *body* which enjoyed before entering into the grave would suffer beyond the grave. This expectation of the Qumran Eschatological Community indeed reflects Habakkuk 2:4. The archaeology in Qumran site, especially in the graveyard, adds further to their belief in the bodily resurrection.[29]

6. Life of Adam and Eve

It is a Jewish haggadic[30] work which survives only in Latin and Greek (The Apocalypse of Moses). It might have been written between 100 BCE and 70 CE and it is known for Christian interpolations.[31] The references on resurrection in this work are very much in tune with the creation story and try to set right the humanity to its original status.

> 10:2 And Eve wept, saying, "Woe is me! For when I come to the day of resurrection, all who have sinned will curse me, saying that Eve did not keep the command of God."
>
> 13:3 Then all the flesh from Adam up to the great day shall be raised such as shall be the holy people.
>
> 28:4 ...if you guard yourself from all evil, preferring death to it, at the time of resurrection I will raise you again, and then there shall be given to you from the tree of life, and you shall be immortal forever.

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[29]G. Vermes, "*Qumran Forum Miscellanea I*," 304; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, 144, f.n.1, 151; R. A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999, 25; R. E. Brown, et al, "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," 1076-1077. J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," 35. The north-south orientation of the graves, with the head at the south end, can be described as the desire of the community members to see the Paradise in the north as they would be raised in the general resurrection. M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1961, 141.

[30]Of explanatory or homiletic nature.

[31]J. L. Sharpe, "The Second Adam in the Apocalypse of Moses," *CBQ* 35 (1973), 35-46, 35; J. H. Mozley, "The 'Vita Adae,'" *JThS* 30 (1929), 121-149, 121; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 59-60; H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 72; L. S. A. Wells, *The Books of Adam and Eve*, AP-2, 126-127.

> 32:4 Rise, Eve, from your repentance, for behold, Adam your husband has gone out of his body. Rise and see his spirit borne up to meet its maker.
> 41:3 Now I promise to you the resurrection; I shall raise you on the last day in the resurrection with every man of your seed.
> 43:2 And the archangel Michael said to Seth, "Thus you shall prepare for burial each man who dies until the day of resurrection."

These references speak of the universal resurrection of all human beings. Since the hero and the heroine of this work are Adam and Eve, the *Parents of Humanity*, the author deducts the reason to include the whole of humanity in the context of resurrection. It is because of their sin, the whole of humanity lost its status as originally intended by the Creator. And now the author is concerned to bring back the lost status through them. The references are clear enough to give an idea of the mystery of death: sin is the cause of death; at death the infused soul returns to its master (spiritual immortality); at resurrection all the *flesh* (the whole body/humanity) will be raised up; the evil heart that is inclined to sin and caused death will be removed that the people may not incur death once again; with the right understanding they will have recourse to the delights of the paradise in the presence of God.[32]

7. *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 4Ezra and 2Baruch

These three works are considered inter-dependent and so we consider them together. A midrashic work of Hebrew origin, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Pseudo-Philo) is available only in Latin. The period between 70 and 135 CE is said to be the time of its writing and the content of this work has some affinity to rabbinic tradition. 4Ezra is preserved fully only in Latin. It might have been written in between 90 and 120 CE. 2Baruch, a Hebrew or Aramaic work and translated in Greek, is now extant to us only in Syriac. The time of its writing is suggested to be the same as that of the 4 Ezra.[33] We find some references in these works on resurrection.

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[32]H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 59-60, 72-74; D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 59-60; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, 49; J. L. Sharpe, "The Second Adam in the Apocalypse of Moses," 36, 39-40.

[33]A-M. Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudépigraphes Grecs d'Ancien Testament*, 82, 93, 185; D. J. Harrington, "The Biblical Text of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *CBQ* 33 (1971) 1-17, 1-2; D. S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 62-65; G. Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung*, 73, 106; L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish*

> … And I will bring the dead to life and raise up those who are sleeping from the earth … that I may render to each according to his works and according to the fruits of his own devices, until I judge between the soul and the flesh (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 3:10).
>
> [31]And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. [32]And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the chambers shall give up the soul which have been committed to them (4Ezra 7:31-32).
>
> All who have fallen asleep in hope of Him shall rise again. And it shall come to pass at that time that the treasuries will be opened in which is preserved the number of the souls of the righteous, and a multitude of souls shall be seen together in one assemblage of one thought, and the first shall rejoice and the last shall not be grieved (2Bar 30: 2).
>
> And the dust will be called, and told, "Give back that which does not belong to you and raise up all that you have kept until its own time" (2Bar 42:8).

Raising those who sleep clearly indicates the resurrection of the body. The judgment of both body and soul[34] in these books further strengthens the argument that the body would be there to encounter the judgment. Resurrection is for all and not restricted only to the righteous.

While speaking about the resurrection of Moses, the author of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* says in 19:12,

> … But neither angel nor man will know your tomb in which you are to be buried until I visit the world. And I will raise up you and your fathers from the land of Egypt in which you sleep, and you will come together…

A special living place is promised here. The *sleep* of the patriarchs in the OT finds its meaning here: a sleep of death from which they will be awakened.

Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par, 132; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, 35, 40; R. E. Brown, et al, "Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature," 1062-1064; W. S. Towner, "Form-Criticism of Rabbinic Literature," *JJS* 24 (1973) 101-118, 114.

[34]In these books we find in many places the separation between the body and the soul at death. Cf. *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 23:13; 28:3; 32:13; 33:4; 43:7; 44:10; 54:6; 62:9; 64:5-7; 4Ezra 7:78, 100. Yet, in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 44:10 and 4 Ezra 4:33 the author speaks of some kind of consciousness. But G. Stemberger argues that they both are not opposed to each other. The idea that the body and the soul are together for judgment at resurrection is found in the rabbinic tradition, the parable of the Lame and the blind man. See G. Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung*, 104, 108.

The special place to live in and the act of being awakened suggest a bodily resurrection, because the resurrected people are to live a life in a place.

4Ezra compares the status of the intermediary existence between death and resurrection to pregnancy[35] in 4:42:

> He said to me, "In Hades the chambers of the souls are like the womb. For just as a woman who is in travail makes haste to escape the pangs of birth, so also do these places hasten to give back those things that were committed to them from the beginning.

2Baruch on the contrary explains the status of the resurrected bodies in 50:2 and in 51:10.

> 50:2For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back.
>
> 51:10For they will live in the heights of that world and they will be like the angels and be equal to the stars. And they will be changed into any shape which they wished, from beauty to loveliness, and from light to splendour of glory.

Here we have two important developments. The body will be resurrected with all its characteristics in order to be identified for the sake of judgment. Once the judgment is passed, the bodies of the righteous will be transformed into a glorious one in the way each one likes. Yet, we do not find a clear doctrine on resurrection; rather it might have been used to exhort and reassure the people of the rewards beyond grave for their fidelity and good actions or to fight the denial or a doubt of the resurrection.[36]

8. Conclusion

Resurrection is seen as a precondition of the judgment of humankind. Persecution, religious or political, has been the *Sitz im Leben* of resurrection motive in these writings. It is motivated by the problem of the suffering of the righteous and the value of their right conduct during their lifetime. The unfulfilled happy and peaceful life of the righteous person is postponed to the life after death. The concept of religious and national restoration is seen through the restoration of life beyond grave. Though

[35]This comparison is very close to rabbinic thoughts. The Targum of Isaiah paraphrases 14:19 the same in a vivid way. Cf. J. F. Stenning, ed. and tr., *The Targum of Isaiah*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953, 48-51; H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 83.

[36]It is closer to the parallel reflections among the early Christian communities. Cf. 1Cor 15:35-54; 2Bar 52:7. G. Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung*, 94; H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 78, 89.

they deal with the concrete historical situations, many references point to a bodily resurrection. The shadowy and passive life in the *Sheol* gains a better position in the apocalyptic. There is an identification of the persons and therefore the souls are joyful. They eagerly look forward to resurrection. The material body is also given importance in some of the passages in the context of resurrection. The Hebrew anthropology was a real preoccupation in the Palestinian Jewish context.[37] The body destroyed through decomposition would come back to existence in all its respects and particularities. The authors trace the authenticity back to heavenly sources in order to convince the audience. We have also found traces of Greek philosophical and pharisaic influence in some of the passages. The authors tried to solve the contextual problem of evil and suffering of the righteous in a theological and apocalyptic manner. The unjust suffering and the untimely cruel death of the righteous amidst the silence of God inspired the people of God to look for answers beyond the silence of graveyard.

[37]The Greeks thought that the body was considered as the *mortal shell of the immortal soul*. But the Hebrews thought that man is not conceived to be a duel fashion as *body* and *soul*, but synthetically as a unity of vital power or a psychophysical organism. Each member of the body is related to a psychical property. Hence man is, for the Hebrews, an animated body and not an incarnated soul. Man is regarded as a unity of personality, not a dichotomy of body and soul or a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit. Cf. K. Schubert, "*Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit*," 177-178. For the relation between the members of the body and psychical properties see, D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 140-145; I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1967, 98.

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DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

V. F. Vineeth♦

1. Introduction

Human being is a person walking to his own death. Therefore, he is called *martya*: mortal, born to die. The Sanskrit word for death is *mrtya*, is derived from the Sanskrit root *mr* (means to die). The Latin equivalent is *mors* (*mortis*): death. As per the word meaning, every human being is born to die. This is because as an embodied being, the human being is subject to the operative dynamics of time. He is born in time, called to live in time, and destined also to leave the time-zone of his existence. This takes us to the questions on time and the nature temporality. What it means to say that human beings are temporal beings is of fundamental interest for philosophical investigations. Are we born in time only to cease to exist after a few years of existence? Is death really the end of the life-span or is there an afterlife? These are fundamental questions raised by all human beings.

2. The Nature of Temporality

Any being, with a material body subject to movement and change is having a time-bound, temporal form existence. Time could be described as a measure of durations of events and the intervals between them which could be counted second by seconds, minutes by minutes or hours by hours, as the twin hands of any clock would tell us, by their movements. What we call time depends on the movement of the planets, especially the earth and the sun. To be temporal means to be time-bound, i.e., tied up with the globes near or even afar. The entire universe, when there is any sort of material stuff is there, has the time factor governing these movements.

The human being, in spite of its soul, is a creature living on earth, moving on earth, watching the movements of the other globes, and accommodating themselves as to the time to work, to rest, to wake up, etc.

♦**Prof. Dr. V. F. Vineeth CMI**, a socially sensitive philosopher-mystic, holds two doctorates – one in western philosophy (Gregorian, Rome) and the other in comparative religion (Oxford), and had been Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Religion at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore for a long time. All his religious and academic endeavours find fruits in Vidyavanam Ashram, "a house of study and research, reflection and meditation, and becoming in the Spirit for the integral welfare of humanity," that he has founded a decade ago in Bangalore.

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Human beings live in time and they are temporal beings. In other words, we are temporal in nature. The question is: Is death the end of this life?

3. Is Death the End of Our Temporal Life?

All over the world we see a strong human tendency to go beyond death. Prayers addressed to God are seen in the scriptures. Already in the Vedic period, people offered sacrifices to restore the lost rhythm of the universe and thereby also to gain the gift of immortality. Life after death was a living quest. *Rgveda* says:

> On the power of sacrifice which is grounded in highest heavens
> and by Cosmic Order in Cosmic Order established,
> [our Fathers] though mortal, attained immortal seats
> in those spheres above which firmly support the heavens (X.80.4)

Later in the Upanishads we find the famous prayer: "Lead me from unreality to reality, lead me from darkness to light and lead me from death to immortality" (*Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.3.28). Already much before the dawn of Christianity human beings prayed for a good death and even practiced penance for the sins they would have committed.

In one of the older Upanishads we have the lovely story of a young boy, Naciketas who walked up to the house of the Lord of death to know the secret of death and the place where people go after death. Though Yama, the god of death, tried to persuade the boy from his quest with different worldly boons the boy insisted on knowing the mystery after death. After a long discussion finally Yama proposes a way to get out of the grips of death and attain Brahman. "When all the desires that dwell within the human heart are cast away, then a mortal becomes immortal and even attains Brahman" (*Katha Upanishad* 2.3.14).

The idea of immortality is illustrated in the story of the churning of the milk sea. According to the story, in answer to the prayer of the suras (meaning shining with light), God gave them a favour, the gift of immortality. This will not be given, however, without some effort from the part of the recipients. So it was suggested to them to churn a great milk sea in heaven. God Vishnu told them he himself will come in the form of tortoise and remain in the depth of the sea to help the churning. The suras could place on him the mountain called Mandana and churn the sea using a serpent called Vasukhi. When the churning was about to start, the asuras (not so shining people) came to Vishnu and complained against discrimination done to them, because they too are created by Vishnu. Vishnu in his characteristic generosity allowed them also to participate in

the churning. When they joined in the great churning, the asuras found that the suras are already on the head-side of the serpent and asuras are left over to the tail side. They protested and the suras agreed to move to the tail side. As the churning proceeded, Vasukhi was tired and vomited poison. The asuras thinking this would be the nectar of immortality consumed it immediately, not giving a drop to the suras and all of them died. By this time, the real nectar of immortality emerged to the surface of the sea and the suras took and ate it and became immortal.

The stories narrated point to the truth that immortality was a certainly a quest and it was available too. Since human being is not just a body with animal sensation, but also with a soul, which is spirit or consciousness by nature, this quest for immortality is natural. But, it is a gift to be earned as well. This does not mean that any human being can claim immortality to him/her unless it is given to him/her by the author of life who has created him/her with an immortal soul. Soul, spirit, is by nature immortal. Hence the question, what is human death?

Human being, as the word *martya* means, is a person walking up to his death. Every human being is endowed with enormous possibilities which can be realized in oneself. But whatever they be, one event or ordeal he/she has to face is to go through the pains and pangs or thrills and threats of death. He/she is said to be a Being-unto death. Every human being has to go through two kinds of death. One, which is normally understood as death, is the corporeal or bodily death, which is normally understood as the basic principle of life or power of life which kept this person living and operating is departing from him/her or is not operative any more. In human beings, death is understood as the departure of the soul, the ultimate principle of consciousness, operating in and through the body. In animals this is understood as cessation of the principle of life which is largely sensational. Some say that the animal does not die, in the strict sense of the word. They cease to be as the cells of their body get disintegrated. Human beings, because the soul is spirit and cannot be disintegrated, however, continue to live. When, where, how the soul is going to live without the body is really a mystery for us. Mystery does not mean it is meaningless or untrue or not to be experienced at all. It means only that when the human life transcends the temporal layers of existence, it also transcends the purely natural or rational level of understanding. Then what is that level of understanding, beyond reason? Religions generally say that this is experienced, rather than understood, in faith level. As mind's level is reason soul's level is faith, a superior knowledge depending on revelations

to which the sacred scriptures of religions belong, with genuine individualistic differences, but usually assuming a different source of light beyond the level of pure mental logic. In faith level we understand many things which our mind may initially object. If we accept the entire human being with bodily, mental and divine consciousness within, mind level is a lower level of knowledge, leading us to superior levels of consciousness, experiences which takes place in the depth of one's own soul. In this level death is not at all the end of life; death is an opening of a door to the next life, which we call life after death. Different forms of life after death appeared in human thinking and writing, especially in religious literature, as we shall examine in the following sections.

4. Afterlife as a Chain of Rebirths in the Sea of *Samsara*

Rebirth is a form of explanation on afterlife, an ancient view prevalent in many parts of the world, and very much so in India. The Bhagavad-Gita discusses this problem rather elaborately relating rebirth to human actions (*karma*). "Of that which is born, death is certain, of that which is dead birth is certain. Over the unavoidable, therefore, thou oughtest not grieve" (*Gita* 2.27). The reason for rebirth is the bondage of the soul to the material results of the action. Action with desire and attachment binds. "Work (with desire) is verily far inferior to that performed with the mind undisturbed by the thoughts of results. O! Dhannanjaya, seek refuge in this evenness of mind. Wretched are they who work for results (material results only)" (*Gita* 2.49). Hence, the *Gita* suggests performing all actions without attachments and the resultant bondage of the soul to this world of actions, in the spirit of true yoga, that is, with the spirit of detachment, transcendence, equanimity and also a selfless desire to be united with God. This is the way by which the resultant bondage can be removed: "Being steadfast in yoga, O! Dhananjaya, perform actions, abandoning attachments, remaining unconcerned as regards success or failure. This evenness of mind is known as yoga" (*Gita* 2.28).

All these instructions are given that the souls remain free of attachment and bondage and may eventually reach the final goal which is soul's union with God, which again is interpreted in different ways by different authors such as non-dualism (*advaita*) of Sankara, qualified non-dualism (*Visistadvaita*) of Ramanuja and dualism (*dvaita*) of Maddhava. And in the last chapter Gita very clearly says that this aspired goal can be met: "Be of my mind, be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, bow down to me. Thou shalt reach myself; truly I promise unto thee, thou art dear to me" (*Gita* 18.65).

5. *Sunya* and *Nirvana*

Prince Siddhartha, the later Buddha, born and brought up in a palace was not very happy with the palace amenities and comforts of life. The vision of human suffering, old age and death of people moved his compassionate heart, all the more so, because all of them as per the rebirth belief are going to be born again to repeat the same ordeal of life and death. How to put a stop to this process of rebirth, Siddhartha thought very deeply, desirous of finding out a solution. The determined search had a result. Siddhartha was enlightened and became the awakened one, the Buddha. Rebirth is the fruit of desire, because of the clinging attachment (*thrsna*) to the world, to the pleasures of the world, to all the passing superficialities of the *samsara*, namely the world which is always moving, changing and thus radically unreliable. *Kama* or desire to relish these passing superficialities makes human beings literally slaves to this world, tied down by the fetters of unfreedom and bondage. Buddha, therefore, proposed desirelessness as the way. He used the pali word *nekkama* (*na-kama*) instead of the Sanskrit word *nishkama*, because the solution was proposed to the common folk and not specially to the elite of the society who used Sanskrit (*Samskrtam* – well done, opposed to *pra-krtam* – pre-done).

Nekkama theory advocated the renunciation of all binding desires in all their forms. Two schools of philosophy developed in the course of time: the theory of emptiness (*sunya-vada*) and a theory of the abode of wisdom (*alaya-vijnana*. The dynamics of life after death is now presented as *sunya* and the soul, as it is, not sticking to any creature in any way, simply dissolves or extinguishes flame of existence (*nirvana*). The word *sunya*, though it is negatively articulated is not mere negativity or unqualified pure nihilism. Rather the Buddhist *sunya* calls our attention to the incomprehensibility and the ineffability of that One (the upanishadic *tat-ekam*), the really real (*satyasa satyam*) which is everywhere, but also nowhere. It is ever concealing and revealing, and baffles the thinking mind, struggling to understand the incomprehensible. It is a vast expanse of 'nothingness,' which perhaps is everything as well; but to the thinking mind eager to gasp the ungraspable, it escapes the grip leaving the subject, in utter incomprehensibility as an overwhelmingly grand nothingness around. One cannot name it, it always eludes or slips, one cannot touch it, it is untouchable, but it is there frightening and fascinating, as a combination of *sat-asat*, as Sankara calls it later. When the aspect of *asat* dominates, it is *maya*, illusion, nothingness an experience of *sunya*. But

when the counter part of *sat* dominates you have *satya* (truth), the claim of *sat* (being) over you. *Sunya* is ultimately the negation of the negation we see in all creatures, characterized by limitation, a kind of negation of existence. A limited form of existence is not understandable in itself, unless it is somewhere related to the fullness of being. And to come to this fullness the finite intelligence has to pass through a kind of *sunya* experience of all what is finite, creatively, dependent, ever moving to change and extinction (*nirvana*).

Even in the Christian mystical theology, the holy soul aspiring to progress in contemplative prayer has to pass through the dark nights of senses, intellect, memory and will. St John of the Cross, the great mystical theologian, calls it the night of purification. In effect it is a kind of *sunya* experience with regard to everything that is not God; the soul is saying to everything *neti*, *neti*, not this, not this, until it reaches God in whose image God has created this aspiring holy person. I am not saying the Buddhist *sunya* is exactly the same as the dark nights about which St John of the Cross describes. The greatest difference is the silence about God in *sunya* mysticism. According to John of the Cross it is the Holy Spirit, the divine consciousness within, which guides the soul through the nights of purification and also though the further stages of divine union. The Buddhist sunya experience did not stop there. It was only one of the schools.

Buddhism very soon moved to another school of thought, in which the *jiva* (soul) was seen as the abode of wisdom (*alaya-vijana*) or at least participation in the true nature of reality which is the abode of wisdom (*alaya-vijnana*). Each soul has to realize this. Buddhism also speaks of Boddhisattvas, the realized souls, coming down to earth even after their physical depth, in order to assist other souls in finding their way to liberation.

Both in Hinduism and Buddhism liberation is always understood as the liberation of the soul (spirit) from the bondages of *karma*, and *kama*-born rebirth. Effectively it was liberation of the soul from the body and body bound bondages to this world. Liberation of both body and soul and the dead rising again with body and soul was not seriously taken into consideration.

6. Death as a Preamble of Resurrection

As we have already seen life after death was part of religious faith almost in all religions. This was almost always, however, the story of the departed

souls. A promise of a new life with the resurrection of the body is not clearly treated, and was not usually expected. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus, not expecting resurrection, but to embalm the body of Jesus according to the traditional Jewish customs. To her great surprise, however, she did not see Jesus in the tomb, instead got a message from the angels: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5) Because the resurrection idea was not there, she was naturally very sad. Even after Jesus spoke to her, she could not recognize him. This is because the mind does not expect something like that. Hence resurrection of Jesus was a great surprise also to her even though she had witnessed how Jesus had called the dead Lazar to life.

"Dust you are, to dust you return" (Genesis 3:19). We often see this inscription written large on the coffins in which the dead bodies are carried to their burial places. When the Word became flesh, the Word did not choose a human body to return to the dust from which human bodies have come. Thus the body of Jesus, though in everything like us, except sin, is a body designed for the Word.

Very likely, this is the first human body, God the Father ever designed, a body for his Son, the Word, when he comes down on earth in the form of human being. In the likeness of this body which was externally in the mind of God, God created the first parents. And Jesus himself says: "Before Abraham, was I AM" (John 8:58). The Word exists from the very beginning, contemplating everything what is going to happen, including his own incarnation, not primarily because of sin and the need of reparation, but because it was His delight to be with human children. According to this view the idea incarnation was not necessarily a thought after sin. But when sin maligned the divine rhythm in the world, the incarnate God, who came in the fullness of time, took upon himself the suffering in the world, which is nothing but awareness of disorder in all levels of awareness namely of the senses, the mind and the soul and all sorts of agonies they bring in. Thus Jesus restored the rhythm of the universe which was lost by sin.

Blessed Virgin Mary was specially thought of as "Immaculate," because the Word could become flesh in this immaculate body unstained by sin. It is this body that is now resurrected, conquering the sting of death. St Paul says:

> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying

> that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:53-57).

The idea of resurrection entirely changes the sad feelings of doom, destiny and sorrow associated with death; death is no more a threat but it can be faced even as a thrill.

7. A Call to the Graceful Offering of Life to God

Is death a call to threat or thrill? This entirely depends on the level of your consciousness formation. If your consciousness longed to see God, to be with him forever and ever, is the most rewarding and surprising end of your temporal or earthly life. It could be a thrill to enter into next phase of life, all the more so because now you enter into an open area of everlasting life, obviously an area of amazing thrill with no shades or shallows of fear. It will be just the opposite, however, if you have a timid, wavering consciousness, a consciousness of no decision for what is real and genuine, what is light and darkness and ultimately what is true love and selfish greed. An earth-bound, ego-centred consciousness looks at death as threat, an intolerable question mark hanging over his head and an inevitable hook which he cannot avoid, in spite of his wealth, weapons, amenities and ambitions. To such a person death is a fatal departure from all that he/she stood for. It becomes threat depending upon the accumulated crust sticking on to the consciousness which could have been otherwise a crystal clear reflection of his/her own God whose image this person is. As St Paul says, "we have this treasure in jars of clay" (2 Corinthians 4:7). If the dying person's life was totally focussed on the jars of clay rather the divine treasure inside the total break of this jar will be miserably threatening, even to the extent to an inescapable doom. There is nothing to wonder; everyone reaps only what has been sown.

This need not be the case, however. The human being is created in the image of God and the word image means an unalterable reference to the original and for the well being of the image, the image should always fall back to the original. That is why St Augustine said "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" *Confessions* (1,1-2, 2.5,5). So there is a journey to life after death, but that is really made before death, but you reach this goal only at the moment of death. In this journey to life after death, but really made before death,

preparing ourselves to death, one has to die to all that is evil, untruth and to all that stand against one's own inner most consciousness. As the Psalmist says, "For your sake we are killed every day" (44:22). For such a person death is not a threat at all. Death now becomes a surrender of one's self to God, as Jesus cried from the Cross: "Father, into your hands I place my spirit" (Luke 23:46) Death is the last act a human being can do for God. If it so happens death is not a threat at all, but a happy invitation to a life which is prepared for you by the Lord. The words of Jesus during his conversation with his disciples during the last supper present this idea very clearly. He says: "Do not be worried and upset. Believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my father's home, and I am going, to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am" (John 14:1-3). Here, death is not a threat, but a sweet invitation. Of course all disciples of Jesus died as martyrs witnessing their unshakable faith in the Lord. We also see many saints suffering during their life time.

Some of them even offer themselves as victims of holocaust that they may more intensely participate in the suffering of Christ and thus also participate in the salvific mission of saving souls. The great saints of our own time, St Theresa of Lissieux and St Alphonsa are brilliant examples for this. Suffering does not mean death has a wrong message. Jesus died in bitter sufferings. When selfish people distort the rhythm of the universe for their on hold of power, superiority and control, the holy souls offer themselves as victims of sacrifice, to restore the balance of distortion by their self sacrifice. Their death will be painful, but not fearful or threatening. They do feel also an inner thrill of joy in the midst of suffering, because in that way they become harbingers of a healing touch to many who suffer. In the theology of the mystical body of Christ, this vicarious suffering is possible and acceptable. St Paul says: "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24). For all of these saintly people, suffering or death is not a threat, rather an invitation to enter into life-everlasting.

8. Conclusion

One thing Christianity believes is that you can welcome your death with peace and serenity of mind. Though the reason may not grasp many things happening around you, the faith can accept the unacceptable, if we have deep faith in afterlife and if the conscience is clean. This is possible not

just to Christians; but the doctrine of resurrection does strike a different note in the song on afterlife.

St Paul says: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). It is through his own death Christ brought life, establishing a kingdom of heaven, not of this earth, but for our life after death. It is through his own acts of suffering and reparation he restored justice and the divine rhythm which was basically destroyed by sin, the rise of human consciousness against the divinely established rhythm in the universe. The life after death Jesus promises is not a life under any worldly kingdom. It is a kingdom based on the reign of God's own consciousness operating in and through all the good-hearted human beings. He has promised a life to us, as he himself said to Pilot, "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

The entry to this kingdom, which is life after our corporeal death, is based on the basic principle of love, the reflection of God's true nature, in all who want to enter. The entry to this life after the death is denied to all, no matter to what religion you belong to, who neglected love to the other human beings. There in that heavenly kingdom God who is love reigns, love is the only norm for entry permit, and all will reflect God in their way as you see your image in a mirror and will shine like stars in heaven. It is what Christian doctrine calls the communion of saints, communion of hearts, all in one.

I would like to conclude this paper quoting from the *Upanishad* and from the Book of Revelation, which shows great family resemblance. *Katha Upanishad*, one of the oldest Upanishad says about the final state as follows: "There the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor the stars. Then how will fire shine. All follow Him who shines forth and by His rays all are illumined" (*Katha Upanishad* II.2.15). The book of Revelation in the Bible describes the final state as follows: "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it" (Revelation 21:23-24). From a Christian point of view, in this phase of life after death there is only one centre which is God or the Lamb of God, representing Jesus, there is only one light by whose light everyone shines forth.

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ESCHATOLOGICAL VISION OF SYRO MALABAR EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Geo Pallikunnel♦

1. Introduction

Human beings are oriented towards the future, though they stand on the past and act in the present. Time, in the Christian tradition, starts from God and ends in God. Eschatology is the systematic reflection on the end times and the heavenly realities. From a Christian point of view, Jesus through his incarnation, life, death and resurrection inaugurated the eschatological kingdom. Church is the visible sign of this reality. She commemorates and celebrates this eschatological reality in Jesus Christ in her liturgy and looks forward to the future glory with her heavenly bridegroom. Liturgy as one of the main *locus theologicus* of the Christian tradition we try to reflect on the end times and the heavenly realities, based on the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Syro Malabar Church of the East Syriac tradition. Since this tradition developed in Asia, outside the Roman and Hellenistic cultures and philosophies, it has a unique value in the whole Christian tradition. While the Western Christian tradition thinks of an other-worldly eschatology, the East has a vision of a realized eschatology here and now, especially in its liturgical celebration. Tomasso Federici aptly points out this:

> The Roman Liturgy, in fact, think of the earthly reality worked out by the Church, and prays that it may be taken to heaven by the angel of the Lord to the heavenly altar, to have it the definitive sanction from God. The Orientals, on the contrary, think first of all about heavenly liturgy and transfer everything here and now, on earth to that in such a way that the earthly altar really becomes the heavenly altar.[1]

♦**Dr. Geo Pallikunnel, CMI**, is Associate Professor in Eastern Liturgy at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. He had his higher studies in theology and Syriac language at DVK and Oriental Institute, Oxford, UK, and did his licentiate and doctorate in Eastern Liturgy at the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome. Besides the abstract of his doctoral dissertation (*Elevation to the Divine State through Holy Qurbana*, Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum, Romae 2009), he has published many scholarly articles. At present he is the managing editor of the Dharmaram Journals and also a member of the Central Liturgical Committee of the Syro Malabar Church.

[1]T. Federici, *Introdizione alle Liturgie Orientali*, (PIL, pro manuscripto) Roma: PIL 1975, 122-123. See V. Pathikulangara, *Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy I Introduction*, Kottayam: Denha Services, 1982, 101.

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2. Time and End-Time in the Christian Tradition

The awareness of time and space is in the very consciousness of human being and spatio-temporal experience is all pervasive, intimate and immediate. Life, death and time combine in a dynamic unity that has been of concern to all great philosophies and religions and to the arts and humanities. Human beings live within time in the space-bound world. As microcosm each person carries within a piece of the world bound with time in the span of life and becomes hereby a 'historical personality.' Time is the basic component of history as it studies the past events in human terms. It is the record of events in time. Time, like space, is neither homogeneous nor continuous for a religious minded man.[2] End time is related to the perception of time in each religious tradition.

2.1. Jewish Tradition

The ancient Israelites believed in the existence of a transcendent God who made himself present in time through various actions. So they had a view differed significantly from that of the Greeks and other cultures of ancient near East. Their time was defined by a series of special moments that represented the saving acts of God. It was in the time oriented events of history that God was at work accomplishing his will and purpose through the people of Israel. Time for Israel was linear, moving in a particular direction. Time is also marked by prophesy of future events. Past events contained elements of expectation, of hope, of fulfilment, and even the final judgment.

The Hebraic view of time resulted from the emphasis on historical events and prophecy. Unlike the Greek concept of time, the Hebraic approach recognized the presence of the eternal in time. Time and eternity were not antithetical; rather, God, who created time, was active in time, moving it towards the fulfilment that he intended. Time was an integral structure of God's reality. It was not the result of chance but an evidence of God's benevolent care and purpose for his creation. The implication of this concept of time can be seen in the Hebraic view of worship. There Israel anticipated the fulfilment of worship in the dawning of the new age.

2.2. Christian Synthesis

Christian tradition, as continuation and development of Jewish tradition, also considers time as linear and it is the realm of change given to human beings as a task, to integrate themselves, so that they may enter into the

[2]See M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, San Diego: Harcourt, 1987, 68.

timeless relationship with the living God and participate in the divinity. Here we are not considering something of mere mathematical or physical time. As Evdokimov thinks, physical time, an abstraction of our instruments of measurement as regularly recurring identical intervals of time, leads nowhere.[3] Christians, however, are here concerned about existential time, time related to life and relationship with God. As a mathematical abstract it offers no access to a restful presence in the fullness of God's life, which bursts apart all human experience of time, which is promised in faith, which is absolute.[4]

Christianity sees the time as limited and actually part of the creation. The Bible begins with the narration of the creation, and the first thing God made, after he had created the formless and void earth *ex nihilo*, is the time, night and day. All the following creations are performed on days, thus marking already a progression of time in the creative act. Time can be measured right from the beginning of the creation, being itself a creature. God himself is timeless. He is the Lord over time. His quality is eternity (Psalm 102:12ff). He lives forever and He is before and beyond time. At the same time he intervenes in history in order to let man realize his original purpose and to perform redemptive acts. His redemptive will, to elevate creation to the divine and to participate in His life, stands immutably beyond time, but expresses itself within time as saving deeds, which in the tradition of the sacred scriptures count as epochs of salvation and entitle transient time as salvation history.[5] If not interpreted as salvation history, the linear perception of time is absurd and only leads to unending nothingness. In the Christian understanding, time is linear as a precisely given duration, "which comes from God and leads back to God,"[6] so salvific and eschatological in nature. Creation happens within time and moving towards the goal of participating in the fullness of divine life, light and glory. May be this understanding of linear salvific time differentiates the Judeo-Christian world vision from the neighbouring peoples and other religions who adhere to a cyclical and mystical understanding of time.

The two main terms for time in the Bible are *Chronos* and *Kairos*; *Chronos* is the ordinary time whereas *Kairos* is salvific, demanding a decision from human persons. If the persons do not recognize the *Kairos*,

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[3]P. Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959, 205.
[4]M. Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, London: Continuum, 2001, 62.
[5]Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 61.
[6]Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 62-63.

they may miss the opportunity of reconciliation with God.[7] The coming of Jesus Christ into this world is the *Kairos* par excellence. The passage of time indicates also a development of the creation towards its final redemption from the evil forces. Humankind together with the whole creation is heading towards the last day, which is also often called the youngest day, thus giving the impression that one lives under the constant expectation of the end of "his" or "her" time. The coming of Jesus Christ as the saviour into this world is a historical act which cannot be repeated, because everything happens only once during the limited course of time.

God created time and through the incarnation drew it into the sphere of eternity. He is the Lord over time and is really present with time and in time. So "all time is God's time."[8] The entire redemptive history unfolds in two movements, "one proceeds from the many to the One, which is the Old Covenant; and the other proceeds from the One to the many, which is the New Covenant. Christ stands at the middle of these two movements."[9] "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3); and "when all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1Corinthians 15:28). This summarizes the redemptive and eschatological time as God's time.

Jesus Christ, God and man, integrates in himself time and eternity. Through the incarnation he entered time and history and bound them to himself; and through the resurrection and ascension he crosses the history with human being and the cosmos, and entered again the eternity and "reign at the right hand of God." By this act of the incarnation–resurrection Christ becomes the Lord and mediator of time and eternity. At the same time this puts forward in the Christian concept of time a tension between the already and the not-yet. With Christ the new age to come has begun (Ephesians 1:21; 2:7) and the eschatological time has already started.

Christ's incarnation is in time and history: "in his divinity he was born of the Father, beyond all times, without limit and without beginning; and at the end of times, in his humanity, Christ was born of flesh, while the Old Testament still held sway."[10] The Incarnation grounds the

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[7]For a detailed discussion see O. Cullman, *Christ and Time,* London: SCM Press, 1952, 37-50. See also G. Delling "*kairos*," TDNT, 3, 455-461.

[8]J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000, 92.

[9]O. Cullman, *Christ and Time*, 117.

[10]G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, no. 3. See S. Brock, intr. & trans. "Gabriel of Qatar's Commentary on the Liturgy," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*

ontological bond between God and the creatures. The possibility of creation rides on the possibility of divine incarnation in history and time. Humans are because Christ is. The Word adopts the reality of the world as His own through a primordial and eternal divine intention. This intent encompasses the willing of the Christ's humanity and in it of all humanity, and with it the willing of the whole creation as its environment. By this personalization he elevates the assumed humanity, and by that the whole creation, to the realm of the divine.

The resurrection (and the ascension) of Christ is beyond time and space.[11] It is the time of fulfilment and new creation in Christ. The intersection of time and eternity becomes evident in this unique act. In the resurrection the significance of time allows our mind to glimpse beyond the now to the mystery of eternity. In this way there are parallels between the use of symbols and the use of time as aids to remembrance in liturgical worship. This association links the present with the past and anticipates the future.[12] Resurrection of Jesus unites humankind in and beyond time. As Ratzinger says, "Resurrection builds communion. It creates the new People of God... The risen Lord does not remain alone. He draws all mankind to himself and so creates a new universal communion of men."[13]

The Christian understanding of time, thus, incorporated the concepts of *chronos* and *Kairos*, maintaining the distinctions given to them by the Greeks but viewing them in a manner similar to the Israelites. It was governed by a major event through which all other times and events found their meaning – incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Thus, in Christianity all time has a centre. Paul developed this notion in his epistle to the Colossians by declaring that Christ is the creator of all things (1:16), the one who holds all things together (1:17), and the one who reconciles all things (1:20). Christ is the cosmic centre of all history. Everything before Christ finds its fulfilment in him. Everything after Christ finds its meaning by pointing back to him.

6, 2 (2003), 205. www.bethmardutho.org/index.php/hugoye/volume-index/150.html (12.12.2012)

[11]As R. Brown points out, "what is entirely in this world and not beyond time and space is the empty tomb, which is described on the first day of the week by all four evangelists." See R. E. Brown, *A Risen Christ in Eastertime*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1991, 29 (note 30).

[12]P. Atkins, *Memory and Liturgy*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 108.

[13]J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 102.

From Christ, the centre of time, three kinds of time are discerned. First there is fulfilled time. For in Christ the new time (*Kairos*) had arrived, as Jesus himself announced: "The time has come ... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news." (Mark 1:15). Secondly, the coming of Christ was the time of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2. See also Romans 5:6; Colossians 2:15). Thirdly, the Christ event introduces Christian anticipatory time. This aspect of time is based on the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the promise of Christ's return. The Church, like the People of Israel, lives in an anticipation of the future.

3. Eschatological Vision of the Syriac Christian Tradition / Syriac Orient

Following the footsteps of the Jewish and Christian traditions, Syriac theological tradition "in general manifests a great tension and anticipation of the future world, [but] it provides very little detail of the time to come."[14] Though the early writers of this tradition were very much influenced by the ascetical tradition, especially the importance of the life of virginity, they had the least influence from the Hellenistic sources. They always think of eschatology in relation to Christ. Here we take two models of early Syriac thinking, Aphrahat and Ephrem.

Aphrahat's 8th and 22nd Demonstrations (On the Resurrection and on Death and the Last Things) discuss eschatological themes.[15] The kingdom of death has been defeated by Christ, who descended into the sheol (22.1-5). By setting the hearts on the world to come than on this world human beings can reign over the death (22.9-11). According to him, at the time of final judgment everybody will be reconstituted to their final integrity. The just will be rewarded in an environment of beauty and light (22.12-17) and the wicked will be punished in the darkness (22.18-22). At the end this earth will pass away and "God shall make something new for the children of Adam and they shall inherit possessions in the kingdom of heaven" (22.24, II, p. 249). Ephrem, the Syrian also has almost the same pattern of vision of the last things, but a more developed one. He wants his hearers to pray for their dead, so that "they may be worthy of the road to Eden."[16] Ephrem has a positive vision of the role of the body and the whole creation. In a blooming poetic

[14]S. J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1983, 133.

[15]A Syriac Church Father of third-fourth century who wrote 23 Demonstrations about different theological and ascetical themes. For a complete translation of his writings see: K. Valavanolickal, tr., *Aphrahat: Demonstrations*, 2 vols., Moran 'Etho 24, Kottayam: SEERI, 2005.

[16]Nisibean Hymns, 73.4.

language he reminds his readers that at the final resurrection the soul which is the body's "pillar of support" will give life to the body and use it as its musical instrument. What about this earth? He says:

> In the world there is struggle, in Eden, a crown of glory.
> At our resurrection both earth and heaven will God renew,
> liberating all creatures, granting them paschal joy, along with us.

And he asks:

> Upon our mother Earth, along with us, did he lay disgrace
> when he placed on her, with the sinner, the curse;
> so, together with the just, will He bless her too;
> this nursing mother, along with her children,
> shall He who is Good renew.[17]

This reminds us of the universal salvation, where not only the human beings but also the whole universe shall be transformed and raised to the divine eschatological glory at the end.

4. Syro Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy

Syro Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy is a liturgy developed outside the Roman Empire in the East Syriac genre, with Semitic and Asian vision, where Christianity and the Bible had their origin. In this tradition the earthly liturgy is the memorial and celebration of the economy of salvation (*mdabbrānutā*) of God completed in Christ, and the anticipation of the heavenly liturgy.

The earthly liturgy is the icon and foretaste of the heavenly liturgy. Vatican Council II puts it clearly in its Constitution on Liturgy:

> In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle (cf. Revelation 21:2; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:2); we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory (cf. Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:4).[18]

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[17]Hymns on Paradise, 9.1. ET S. Brock, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 1998, 136. This reminds us of Romans 8:19-23.

[18]*Sacrosantcum Concillium* 8. A. Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 25.

The whole Eucharistic liturgy of this tradition is an example of the fusion of the earthly and heavenly liturgies. The Angel's hymn in the beginning, the "thrice holy" doxology of the Lord's Prayer, and the "thrice-holy hymn" repeated three times alternately by the earthly and the heavenly choirs, symbolically represent the downward movement of heaven, the upward movement of creation, and the mingling of them in the liturgy.

The whole liturgy is considered as an image of what is happening in heaven and its revelation. The symbolism of the liturgical space-time orientation and ministers reveals this. As Theodore of Mopsuestia reminds,

> we are necessarily confirmed in the faith of the things revealed to us through this ministry of Sacrament [of Eucharist], as we are led through it to the future reality, because it contains an image of the ineffable Economy of Christ our Lord, in which we receive the vision and the shadow of the happenings that took place.[19]

The whole Eucharistic Liturgy of this tradition reveals this eschatological vision and it culminates in the Communion rite. It is a foretaste of the eschatological life and also a movement towards the final fulfilment.

5. Liturgical Time and Spatial Orientation

The liturgical celebration, like any other action of the Church, is a concrete action that is unfolded in a definite place and at a given time. It presupposes a community to celebrate, a space and time to gather, and a final orientation to reach out. The worshipping community together with the liturgical space and time symbolize this reality. The orientation and the movement of the community in the liturgy point towards the final goal of creation and the movement towards it. The Eucharistic Liturgy, the sum and summit of the whole action of the Church, is the sacrament of this whole process. In the Eucharist not only the human being but the whole cosmic reality is transformed sacramentally. Through the cosmic symbolism of the church building the whole cosmos becomes the divine space-time (or "divine milieu") which is a process looking forward to completion only in the *eschaton.*

5.1. Liturgical Time: Foretaste of the Eschatological Time

The time of the Church is in between type/shadow and the fullness of reality/the eschatological kingdom. The Paradise and later the Israel were

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[19]Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary of Thedore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacrament of Baptism and the Eucharist*, ed. & trans., A. Mingana, WS 6, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1933, 85.

symbols or types of the Church. At the same time the Church itself is a sacramental symbol of the eschatological paradise.

Ephrem sees the Church as the middle stage of a threefold symbolic scheme. In one of the hymns on the Unleavened Bread he says:

> The type was in Egypt, the reality in the Church;
> the sealing of the reward [will be] in the kingdom.[20]

The sacred history of the past is the stage of 'mysteries' (*raze*) pointing towards the middle stage, the 'time of the Church,' which began with Christ. It fulfils the types and is contrasted with them as truth or reality. The fulfilment of this stage, however, will be in the eschatological kingdom.[21] Because the Church is in an interim period and lives between the Passover and the parousia of the Lord, as Schillebeeckx says,[22] it combines in the present time both the past types and future fulfilment.

The Church as the continuation of Christ, who unites time and eternity, here and now, unites time and eternity in its principal action, the liturgy. The Church in the liturgical celebration makes remembrance of the past saving act of God present, unfolding of the future in Christ. In this sense "liturgy is more time centred than space centred. It expresses not only time as timeless, intimations of an unfolding eternity, but also time as timely, a medium of God's presence in the moment."[23] Here both sacred and ordinary time together act as a medium of human elevation to the divine in Christ. So, the liturgical time is the presence of eternity in time, which raises the present reality to God's time. And it is also the time of salvation here and now, *Kairos* in the real sense.

5.2. Sunday: Embodiment of Eschatological Time

Sunday is the real context of the Eucharistic liturgy. Though the Eucharist has an intimate relation with the Jewish paschal celebrations, as Jesus celebrated it in the upper room, it was taken out of the context of the Passover and was placed within the new context of the "Lord's Day," i.e., the day which marked the first meeting with the Risen Lord.[24] Resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the end-times. In the post resurrection meeting with the disciples Jesus ate with the disciples (Luke

[20]H. Unleavened Bread, 5. 23. ET in R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, Cambridge: CUP, 1975, 244.

[21]R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 243-244 (footnote 1).

[22]E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1963, 41.

[23]J. A. Melloh, "Liturgical Time, Theology of," in P. E. Fink, ed., *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990, 736.

[24]J. Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 45.

24:30-31, 42-43), which is a symbol of the Eucharist and the messianic banquet. Eating with the messiah is considered as the sign of the arrival of the end time. The New Testament and the early Christian writings put it as the day of assembly and the Eucharistic liturgy.[25] Not only that, as R. Taft says, "for in the Early Church, Sunday was indeed everything."[26] It is the first day[27] and 8th day, day of creation and new creation, day of light, day of resurrection, day of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), day of Eucharist, day of Baptism, and the day of final rest in God. "It was the symbolic day, sign of the time of the Church between ascension and *parousia*, the time in which we are living now."[28] Among these the Eighth Day, means the complete and eternal rest in God, has special eschatological connotation. It symbolically contains the whole concept of sacred time in a nutshell.

5.3. Spatial Orientation

Turning towards East, while praying, is an ancient custom in the Christian tradition. It symbolically expresses the eschatological expectation and movement towards the Divine. The importance of eastern direction has its biblical and extra biblical basis. In the biblical narrative of creation 'Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East' (Genesis 2:8).[29] Following this tradition some early Jewish Christian (apocalyptic) literature points that the Paradise[30] or Heaven is located in the East.[31] The sin of the first

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[25]See Acts 20:7; *Didache*, 7.

[26]R. Taft, "Sunday in the Byzantine Tradition," in M. Searle, ed., *Sunday Mornings: A Time for Worship*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1982, 49-74, reprint in R. Taft, *Beyond East And West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, 2nd ed., Rome: PIO, 1997, 52.

[27]First day is the symbol of the creation of light and Sun. Later the birth of the Sun God in Rome and also in Egypt is Christianized and made the birth of Christ, the true Sun.

[28] R. Taft, "Sunday in the Byzantine Tradition," 52.

[29]According to S. Brock, the Peshitta and the two Targum traditions (Babylonian and Palestinian) take the Hebrew word *miqqedam* as having temporal meaning of 'from the beginning' rather than spatial meaning 'to the East.' S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 50. It seems that the Hebrew word *qedem* has spatial and temporal connotations.

[30]It is noted that in the concept of Ephrem Paradise is a multilayer mountain, and the *shekinah* at its summit. See Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 52-54.

[31]For example, see, *Testament of Abraham*, XI. ET ANF, X, 192: "When Abraham was very old, God sent Michael to bring him to heaven. Michael brought Abraham to the East, to the first gate of heaven;" *Apocalypse of Peter*, 6. ET ANF, V, 145: "And when we prayed, suddenly there appeared two men standing before the Lord towards the east."

parents resulted in the expulsion of them from the east. Turning towards the East is an act of repentance. It also stands for hope and homecoming. The re-clothing of man with the lost 'robe of glory' and 're-entry into paradise' is the ultimate goal of this movement towards the East. In the early Church on the basis of Matthew 24:27, a popular belief developed that in the second coming, Christ would come from the East. This was further supported by Malachi 4:2, Revelation 22:16 and John 8:12. So, looking and praying to the East stand for our earnest waiting for the coming of Christ, the true light and sun of justice, the healer and saviour of the world. Following Zachariah 6:12, the East has been often understood as a symbol of Christ himself. He is "the *Orient*." But here the emphasis is on the eschatological manifestation of Christ. The eastward orientation symbolizes our hope in the second coming of Christ as well our desire to return to the Paradise.[32]

5.4. Moving towards the East: Moving towards the Lord

The Eucharistic Liturgy is not mere facing towards the east and waiting for the second coming of the Lord. It is rather more a movement towards the Lord, the "Orient", who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Above all it is a movement which is enabled by the Spirit of Holiness to the Father. So it is an elevation to the Divine state in its fullest sense.

Baptism in the Christian tradition is a turning towards the "east" from the "west." In the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful in the Eucharist we can see a reminder of this by the deacon proclaiming: "He who did not receive baptism let him go out." It not only reminds the catechumens to leave but the faithful of their baptismal turning towards the Lord, the "Orient." According to Narsai, through this expulsion "the Holy Church depicts typically those that go forth into that darkness which is in *Gehenna*."[33] But those who remain "with clean garments"[34] remind us of those who with the 'robe of glory' and enter the Paradise.

The sanctuary (*madbhā*) is the symbol of 'heaven' and the 'kingdom which our Lord entered.'[35] The celebrant together with other ministers moving in procession from the *bema* in the nave (*hayklā*) to *madbhā* on the eastern direction before the anaphora is a deep symbol of the

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[32]See *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57.14.

[33]R. H. Connolly, tr., The *Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, Cambridge: CUP, 1909, 3.

[34]Connolly, *A Commentary on the Mass*, 3.

[35]Connolly, *A Commentary on the Mass*, 5.

movement of the whole community, which symbolizes the Church, towards the Lord. According to George of Arbel the three doors (before the apse, in the middle, and before the *bemā*) opened before everyone who wishes to enter into the holy way, begins in Jerusalem. "And from Jerusalem (he goes) to Paradise [Gk. *katastroma*], from Paradise to heaven."[36] According to L. Bouyer, "the dynamism of the Christian celebration is expressed by that procession and the general movement toward the East which it involves." He continues:

> Let us add that, of course, in the Syrian churches which have remained faithful to their early tradition, there are no other seats but those of the clergy. Therefore the whole assembly, far from being a static mass of spectators, remains an organic gathering of worshippers, first centred on the ark [= *bema*], for hearing and meditating upon the scriptures, and finally going toward the East all together, for the Eucharistic prayer and the final communion.[37]

When we think about the symbolism of the altar as the throne of God and the three steps towards the *madbhā* in relation to Trinity this eastward movement becomes more meaningful and experiential. The whole movement completes with the final communion and transformation in the Lord, which is the sole purpose of this movement.

6. Eschatological Vision of the Eucharistic Liturgy Proper

6.1. Death and Sheol

Sheol is the symbol of death. It is "the place in the underworld where in earlier OT thought all the dead lead the same shadowy existence (Genesis 37:35; Numbers 16:30-34; Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 3:13-19; 26:5-6; Isaiah 14:9-11)."[38] We can see this concept in the early Church, especially in the Syriac tradition,[39] which is much influenced by the Jewish world-vision. Narsai depicts how Jesus descended into *Sheol*:

> The vivifier of all descended and bathed in *Sheol*, a dead sea,
> and conferred a power of vitality to the dead waters.

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[36]Connolly, *A Commentary on the Mass*, 4.

[37]L. Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture*, Notre Dame, 1967, 34-35.

[38]G. O'Collins and E. G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, New York: Paulist Press, 2000, 243.

[39]For the theology and the path of this theme's reception in the Syriac Liturgy, see, A. G. Kollamparambil, "The Theme of Sheol in the Syriac Liturgy: The Path to Its Reception," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 113 (1999), 289-306.

With a gentle breeze, he stirred those who were senseless;
and thousands of the dead began to proceed to the rendezvous of life.
By a silent vibration, the mighty one called upon insatiable Death;
and tear up the bond for the debtors who succumbed to sin.[40]

Aphrahat depicts Christ's war with the Evil One at the Sheol: "He entered into Sheol and brought out its prisoners, he fought with the Evil One and conquered him; he trampled him and broke his foothold and spoiled his possessions."[41]

Sheol represents the state of man after his fall, a dead world. T. Spidlik says: "Man, created immortal by God, descends into *sheol* through his sin. He finds himself in a very peculiar situation; though immortal he is under the power of death. Death sums up all the consequences of sin."[42] Christ not merely delivers Adam/humanity from the dead state of sheol but elevated and put him in the Paradise, to his former glory before the fall:

Adam's Lord came out to see him;
He entered Sheol and found him there;
then led and brought him out
to set him once more in Paradise.[43]

Though there is no direct reference of *sheol* in the Anaphora of Addai and Mari there references in the third anaphora, the Anaphora of Nestorius, and the prayers proper:

> He gave himself for all, for death which reigned over us, beneath whose dominion we were subject, to which we were sold because of our sin, and by his precious Blood He redeemed us and saved us. He descended into Sheol and loosed the bonds of death, and because it was not right that he should be held in *sheol* by death, the First-fruits of our salvation rose on the third day and became the First-fruits of those who slept, that he might become the first among all, and ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of your greatness, O God.[44]

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[40] Narsai, "A Homily for the Great Sunday of Resurrection" in F. G. McLeod, ed. & trans., *Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*, Patrologia Orientalis 40, Turnhout: Brepols, 1979, 145, lines 139-144.

[41] Demonstrations, 14. 31. ET K. Valavanolickal, *Demonstrations* II, 81.

[42] T. Spidlik, "Some Aspects of Syrian Spirituality" in C. Payngot, ed., *Homage to Mar Cariattil Pioneer Malabar Ecumenist*, Kottayam: OIRSI, 1987, 89-90.

[43] H. Paradise, 8.10. ET S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 135.

[44] *Anaphorae of Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius*, Kochi: LRC, 2005, 21.

Salvation from the chains of Sheol is part of Christian hope. The resurrection hymn (*Lakumara*)[45] in the beginning of the liturgy is the expression of such a hope. This Christian hope leads one to the resurrection, the door of eschatological life.

6.2. Resurrection of the Dead

Eucharist is the life-giving and divine mystery of the Church. Christ through his incarnation, life death and resurrection incorporated humankind and the whole cosmos into him and lead them back to the eternal life. His resurrection is the pivotal point in the whole Christ event. Eucharistic liturgy celebrates this mystery of resurrection of Christ and looks forward to our own final resurrection. The Resurrection Hymn (*Lakumara*) in the *Enarxis* of the Holy Qurbana is a praise and hope of this central point. The anamnesis at the end of the fourth *g'hanta* prayer says about the commemoration and celebration of the "divine mystery of the passion, the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[46] The Epiclesis is considered as the sacramental commemoration and celebration of the resurrection of Christ by many early commentators of the East Syriac Eucharistic Liturgy.[47]

Eucharist not only commemorates and celebrates Christ's resurrection but also the resurrection of the humankind. Eucharistic liturgy is an anticipation and celebration of our own resurrection together with Christ.[48] The Epiclesis prays also for sending the Holy Spirit in order to have "great hope of resurrection from the dead and new life in the kingdom of heaven."[49] It is the "pledge which we have received and are receiving ... for the pardon of offences and forgiveness of sins, for the great hope of resurrection from the dead and for the new life in the

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[45]It is an ancient hymn that confesses and glorifies Christ who is the quickner of the bodies and saviour of souls. It is one of the archaic elements of the East Syriac liturgy. According to an ancient tradition it is the song sung by those who were (Adam) in the Sheol when Christ descended to it after his death. So it is also known as the "Hymn of Adam." See V. Pathikulangara, *Qurbana: The Eucharistic Celebration of the Chaldeo-Indian Church*, Kottayam: Denha Services, 2007, 166-67.

[46]*Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church*, Trivandrum: SMBC, 1986, 50.

[47]For example, see, Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary*, 104; G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, no. 70; Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 21.

[48]S. G. Thakidiyal, *The Eschatological Vision of The East Syrian Holy Qurbana*. Excerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum, Romae: PIO, 2009, 20.

[49]*Order for the Solemn Raza*, 50-51.

kingdom of heaven..."[50] So, "these glorious, holy, life-giving and divine mysteries are set and arranged on the holy altar of Christ until his second coming from heaven."[51] Eucharistic Communion is the food of immortality, medicine of life and pledge of eternal life.[52] So, the formula at giving communion is "unto the remission of sins and life everlasting."[53] Through the remission of sins in this world the communicant looks forward to the end times and eternal life.

6.3. Parousia

The second coming of Christ[54] is the consummation of the created world. Every Eucharistic liturgy is an appeal to the Father for the final consummation. The early Christians expected the parousia of the Lord during the Eucharistic celebration as the Jews expected the coming of the Messiah on a Sabbath celebration.[55] "He will come again to judge the living and the dead" is the common faith of the Christians. With this faith and hope the liturgical community is waiting for the final reward at the coming of our Lord, "May they be made worthy to receive from you blessed and exalted position at the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."[56]

The Eucharistic Liturgy in the East Syriac tradition reveals, commemorates and celebrates the parousia through different symbolic acts.[57] The solemn procession of the celebrants from sanctuary to bema, veneration of the cross, opening of the sanctuary veil and resurrection Hymn, Sanctus hymn with Hosanna, communion procession etc. are all symbols of the final coming Christ. For example, let us take the communion procession. As we have already seen sanctuary is the symbol of heaven. The celebrant, together with deacons, symbolically represents

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[50] *Order for the Solemn Raza*, 67.

[51] *Order for the Solemn Raza*, 37.

[52] See S. H. Griffith, "Spirit in the Bread; Fire in the Wine": The Eucharist as 'Living Medicine' in the Thought of Ephraem the Syrian," *Modern Theology* 15, 2 (1999), 225-246.

[53] *Order for the Solemn Raza*, 64.

[54] Modern theologians like Karl Rahner think of it as "the world that will come to God in the parousia rather than Christ to the world." G. O'Collins and E. G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, 190-191.

[55] Thakidiyal, *The Eschatological Vision of The East Syrian Holy Qurbana*, 15.

[56] *Anaphorae of Mar Theodore and Mar Nestorius*, 10. K. A. Paul and G. Mooken: *The Liturgy of the Holy Apostles Adai and Mari together with the Liturgies of Mar Theodorus and Mar Nestorius and the Order of Baptism*, Thrissur: 1967, 81,

[57] See Thakidiyal, *The Eschatological Vision of The East Syrian Holy Qurbana* l, 15-16.

the angels Gabriel and Michael, comes to the sanctuary door to distribute communion. This is the symbol of the final coming of Christ who receives the faithful to his final communion, the communion of saints and the life ever lasting. George of Arbel's *Expositio Officiorum Ecclesiaticorum*,[58] explains the symbolism of the communion:

> Gabriel [=the deacon who bears the chalice at the communion service] goes forth, as one who knows the way: for it is he also who will bear the cross of our Lord and come before Him in the resurrection. And here you are to consider the cup as in place of the cross, which in the hand of Gabriel is to appear before our Lord at His coming... As servants they [sc. the 2 deacons] bow their necks to the service before Christ their master; and while he distributes, they are the bearers of the mansions; shewing by this that the whole service of the resurrection is performed by angels...[59]

The appearance of the cross at the second coming of Christ, a belief of the Jewish Christianity,[60] is the basis of this explanation. The distribution of communion here symbolically considered as the distribution of mansions after the final judgment.

6.4. Heavenly Life

In the Eastern Christian tradition, as we have seen above, liturgy is the foretaste of the heavenly life. So, we can see many references to heaven and heavenly life in the liturgical texts. Because heaven and the eternal life are beyond human comprehension liturgical texts use many symbolic expressions to explain the eternal bliss.[61]

Heavenly court is reverberated with the acclamation of angels and saints: "Holy, Holy, Holy." The heavenly liturgy before the throne of God by the angels (e.g., Isaiah 6; Revelation 4-6 & 19) is the model and end of the earthly liturgy. Singing thrice "Holy" is referred in both the narrations in Isaiah (6:3) and the Book of Revelation (4:8). Isaiah saw in his vision the heaven filled with God's glory. We can see this thrice holy acclamation through out the liturgy: with the Lord's prayer in the beginning and end, *Trisagion* at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Word, anthem of Mysteries at

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[58]Though it is known in the name of George of Arbel many scholars believe that it is an anonymous commentary of the liturgy of 10th century origin.

[59]R. H. Connolly, trans., *A Commentary on the Mass by the Nestorian George, Bishop of Mosul and Arbel*, ed, R. Matheus, Kottayam: OIRSI, 2000, 123-124.

[60]See J. Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964, 269.

[61] Thakidiyal, *The Eschatological Vision of The East Syrian Holy Qurbana*, 33.

the transference of gifts, Sanctus and the following secret prayer of the celebrant and *Sanctum Sanctis* before Communion. The vision of heaven and God's glory in it are symbolized in the Eucharistic Liturgy by the solemn opening of the sanctuary and the incensing before the *Trisagion*. The symbolism of the sanctuary, the upper choir, and the deacons, symbols of angels, serve in the sanctuary to generate a sense of the holy space and the dwellers of heaven in the worshipping community. Following this vision, in response to the invitation of the deacon to "praise the living God,"[62] the earthly and heavenly choirs mingle in singing interchangeably thrice "Holy" to the most Holy Trinity.

At the Incarnation heaven met earth and heavenly choirs descended on earth and sung "Gloria." In the East Syrian tradition this event is celebrated in the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy itself as the liturgy is not merely an earthly liturgy, but heavenly.[63] According to Abdisho the thrice "Holy" hymn before the readings is the proclamation by the angels of the whole salvific plan of the incarnated Word.[64] The goal of the economy of salvation completed in Christ is the participation in the heavenly liturgy and singing "Holy" to the Trinity. Gabriel Qatraya sees the *Trisagion* in relation to the earthly ministry of Jesus: "The *qanona* "Holy ..." is a symbol of the sanctification (of Christ) by the angels who accompanied him during his entire dispensation, just as the blessed Matthew said, "the angels approached and were ministering to him" (Matthew 4:11)."[65]

The downward movement of God, who is holy, mighty, and immortal, is also the downward movement of the heavenly liturgy. Heaven lowers and embraces the earth, in order to raise the earth up to heaven. As M. Kunzler puts it "he [man] has nothing else to do except to enter into the unceasing "Holy" of the angels, who bear the Lord of all in the procession of the heavenly liturgy."[66]

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[62]*Order for the Solemn Raza*, 16.

[63]Voste, "*Liber Patrum*," 18.

[64]Abdisho bar Brikha, *Ordo Iudiciorum*, 94.

[65]G. Qatraya, *Commentary on the Liturgy*, no. 13. See also J. Kochuparampil, trans., *The Mystery of the Eucharist: Syriac Critical text, Translation and Studies of the Chapter "On the Mysteries of the Body and Blood" from The Book of the Seven Causes of the Mysteries of the Church by Catholicos-Patriarch Timothy II (1318-1332)*, Exerpta ex Dissertatione ad Doctoratum, Romae: PIO, 2000, 58.

[66]Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, 20.

Church is the foretaste of the eschatological assembly of saints or the eschatological Paradise, which looks backward also to the first/primordial Paradise. As Ephrem says,

> The assembly of saints
> bears resemblance to Paradise:
> in it each day is plucked
> the fruit of Him who gives life to all;
> in it, my brethren, is trodden
> the cluster of grapes, to be the Medicine of Life.[67]

In this tradition Baptism is frequently described as the re-entry into the Paradise.[68] "Through the working of the Holy Spirit," as Sebastian Brock says, "he has already potentially entered Paradise, in sacred time."[69] And the Eucharist is "the spiritual bread which becomes for everyone an eagle that conveys to Paradise."[70] Moreover, Christ is the tree of life in the Paradise, and the Eucharist is the fruit of this tree that gives life to all who eat it. Ephrem further says in his Commentary on the Diatessaron:

> Just as it was said to Adam, *The day on which you eat of it you will die* (Genesis 2:17), – he did not die however on the day when he ate it, but [instead] received a pledge of his death through his being stripped of his glory, chased from Paradise and haunted daily by [the prospect of] death, – so too, in like manner, with regard to life in Christ, we eat his body instead of the fruit of the tree, and we have altar in place of the garden of Eden. The curse is washed away by his innocent blood, and in the hope of resurrection we await the life that is to come (cf. Romans 8:23-25). Already we walk in a new life, for these [the body of Christ and his altar] are the pledges of it for us.[71]

The Eucharist in the Church combines both the primordial and eschatological Paradise, in sacred time and space.

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[67]H. Paradise, 6.8. ET S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 111.

[68]Christ (who is the perfect image of the Father) is the new/second Adam and Church is the new Paradise. Entry in to Church through baptism is considered as the re-entry into the Paradise, by restoring the "image of God" and "re-clothing by the robe of glory."

[69]S. Brock, *Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, ed., J. Vellian, SCS 9, Poona 1979, 123.

[70]H. Unleavened Bread, 17.12. ET in S. Brock, *Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition*, 123.

[71]*Commentary on the Diatessaron*, 21.25. ET C. McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, JSSS 2, Oxford: OUP, 1993, 329.

Eucharistic Communion is the *sacramental symbol* of the eschatological communion and fulfilment. This eschatological communion is figuratively depicted as a wedding feast.[72] It is the symbol of the Eucharist, where the Bride, the Church or the individual soul, is nourished by the very body of the Bridegroom. The images of the wedding feast and the bridal chamber are highly relevant of the Eucharist and its climax in the Communion.

The praise and thanksgiving is the new wine that fills the participants of the eschatological banquet. The Eucharistic liturgy as the offering of praise and thanksgiving is the mystery of this new order of the wedding feast. In one of the Hymns on Faith Ephrem says:

I have invited You, Lord, to a wedding feast of song,
but the wine – the utterance of praise – at our feast has failed.
You are the guest who filled the jars with good wine,
fill my mouth with your praise.

He continues this in the Eucharistic context:

Jesus, You were invited to a wedding feast of others,
here is Your own pure and fair wedding feast:
gladden Your rejuvenated people,
for Your guests too, O Lord, need
Your songs: let your harp utter.
The soul is Your bride, the body Your bridal chamber,
Your guests are the senses and the thoughts.
And if a single body is a wedding feast for you,
how great is Your banquet for the whole church.[73]

Christ is the bridegroom who invites his bride, the Church / soul, to the bridal chamber, where he shares his body and blood as food and drink. The celebrant's acclamation just before receiving the chalice in the Holy Qurbana is very clear: "For the guests at your banquet, heavenly bridegroom, you have prepared the chalice of your precious blood."[74] Christ the bridegroom mixes his precious blood for the bride and elevates her to the heavenly bridal chamber.

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[72]See the parable of the wedding feast in the Gospels: Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24. Even the wedding feast of Cana is a figure of the eschatological wedding feast where the wine (= joy/praise) is overflowed. See *Hymns on Faith*, 14.

[73]*Hymns on Faith*, 14. 1,4,5. ET S. Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit: Eighteen Poems of Saint Ephrem*, Studies Supplementary to Sobornost No. 4, Oxford: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1983, 18-19.

[74]*Order for the Solemn Raza*, 61.

The Eucharistic Communion is the intimate union of Christ and the communicant. Christ, the Bridegroom, here enters the body of the communicant, and so the body in a very literal sense can be described as the bridal chamber. It is an intimate union of Christ / God with human beings. At Incarnation Mary's womb became the bridal chamber of the Divinity:

> In a womb of flesh was a Bridal Chamber set out
> in whose midst the heavenly Bridegroom lay reclining,
> while the virgin doors were carefully guarded.[75]

According to Sebastian Brock, Communion is the anticipation of the eschatological Bridal Chamber: "The potentiality of entering the eschatological Bridal Chamber is something given at Christian baptism, and this eschatological event can, potentially, be momentarily be experienced in anticipation through Communion."[76] In the Eucharistic Communion the communicant is raised up to the bridal chamber of Christ, which is an anticipation of the heavenly bridal chamber where the full communion takes place. So the Eucharistic Communion here and now (in historical time) can be seen as the betrothal than the final consummation.[77]

6.5. Concept of Hell

The Syriac word '*Gehanna*' is used for hell, the place of eternal punishment. The Eucharistic Liturgy refers to hell as a place of darkness and condemnation. It is also the place of eternal death and separation from the heavenly communion.[78]

Commentators of the liturgy relate various rites of liturgy in relation to the eternal condemnation. For example Pseudo Narsai relates the rite of dismissal to condemnation in the place of darkness. "Sadly they all go forth from the midst of the nave, and lament and stand with great mourning in the (outer) court (*daretha*) of the Church, congratulating those who remain in that enjoyment, and giving woe to themselves for their

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[75]Anonymous, "Hymn on Mary, no.12," ET in S. Brock, *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches*, Kottayam: SEERI, 1991, 59.

[76]S. Brock, "The Bridal Chamber of Light," 189.

[77]According to S. Brock, "the betrothal is seen as taking place in historical time (whether the bride to be is collective or individual), while the marriage feast and the mystery of the consummation of the marriage in the bridal chamber belong to the eschaton." S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 93.

[78]See Thakidiyal, *The Eschatological Vision of The East Syrian Holy Qurbana*, 39-42.

exclusion. By her expulsion (of these) Holy Church depicts typically those that go forth into that darkness which is in Gehanna."[79] Here the author relates this expulsion to the expulsion of the one who has no wedding garment in the parable of the wedding Feast. In the Gospels this parable is related to the heavenly marriage feast.

7. Conclusion

From the above discussion we understand that the Syro Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy has full of allusions to eschatological time/life. As a creation of God (historical) time moves forward to the end times and at last to God himself. Christ, in his person, integrates in him time and eternity, and he is the centre of all history and time. Through incarnation God in Christ entered the historical time definitively and through resurrection he again cross the time-boundary and entered eternity with humankind and the whole creation. This is the basis of the whole Christian eschatological vision.

Liturgy as the expression and celebration of faith reveals this eschatological vision/hope in all through its prayers. This expression may change according to different traditions though the kernel of the faith is same. The Syro Malabar liturgy of the East Syriac tradition has a unique way of expression and celebration of its eschatological vision. The whole Eucharistic Liturgy is considered as the foretaste of the heavenly liturgy. Liturgical time not only points towards the eternity but unites time and eternity. Liturgical space and orientation leads the worshippers to the experience of heaven on earth. They help the community to move from the earth to heaven symbolically. The Eucharistic liturgy proper of this tradition commemorates and celebrates death and resurrection, and eschatological life in heaven with the death and resurrection of Christ, who re-entered the eschatological paradise as the first born of all creation. The poetic and symbolic expressions like Paradise, Wedding Feast, Bridal Chamber etc. reveal partially the eschatological life that is beyond human comprehension. In short the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Syro Malabar Church expresses its faith in the eschatological life in a unique manner.

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[79]Connolly, *The Liturgical Homilies of Narsai*, 3

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